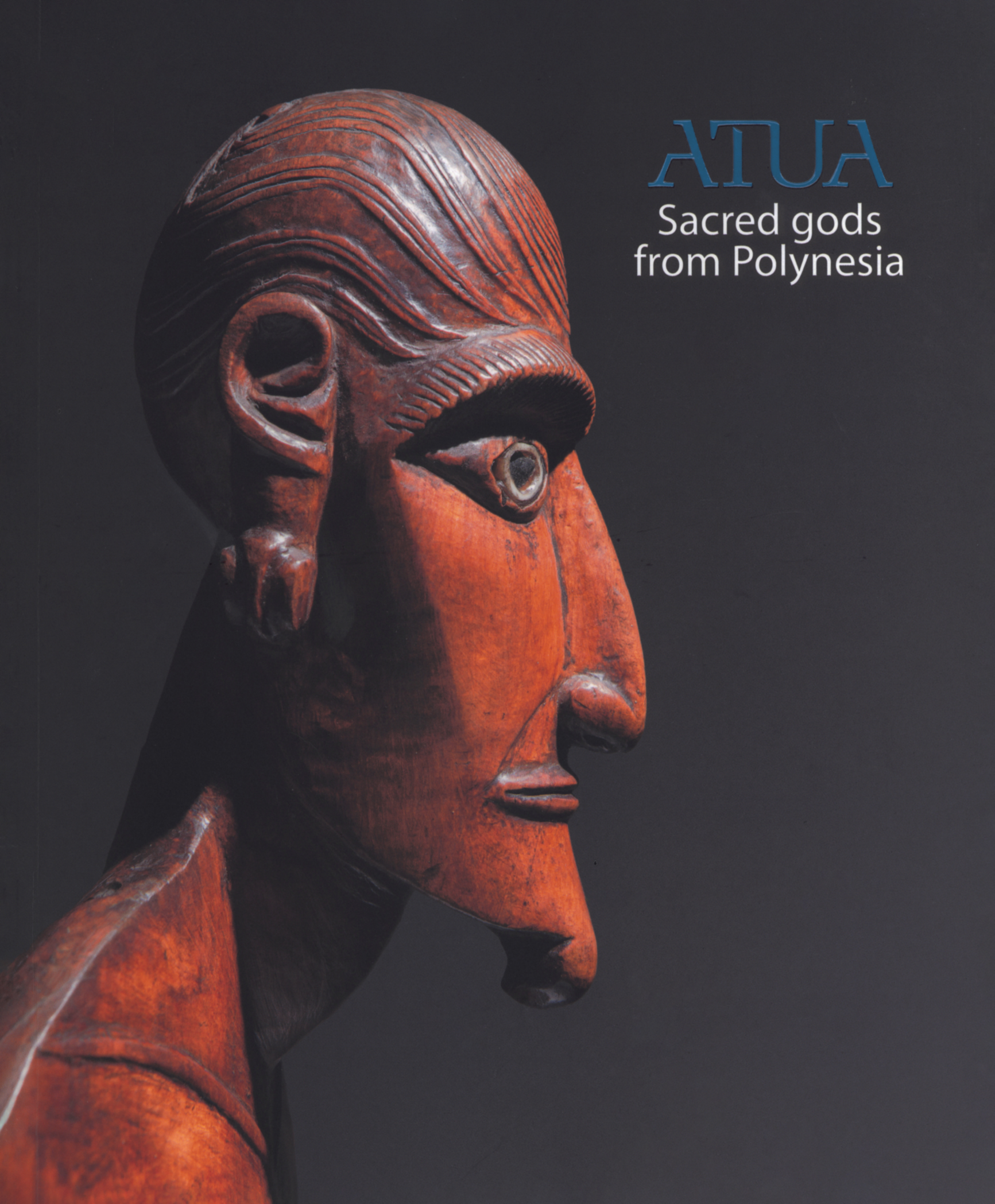

ATUA

Sacred gods from Polynesia

Pointe 3e du Plan général dont la Latitude et la Longitude ont été déterminées.

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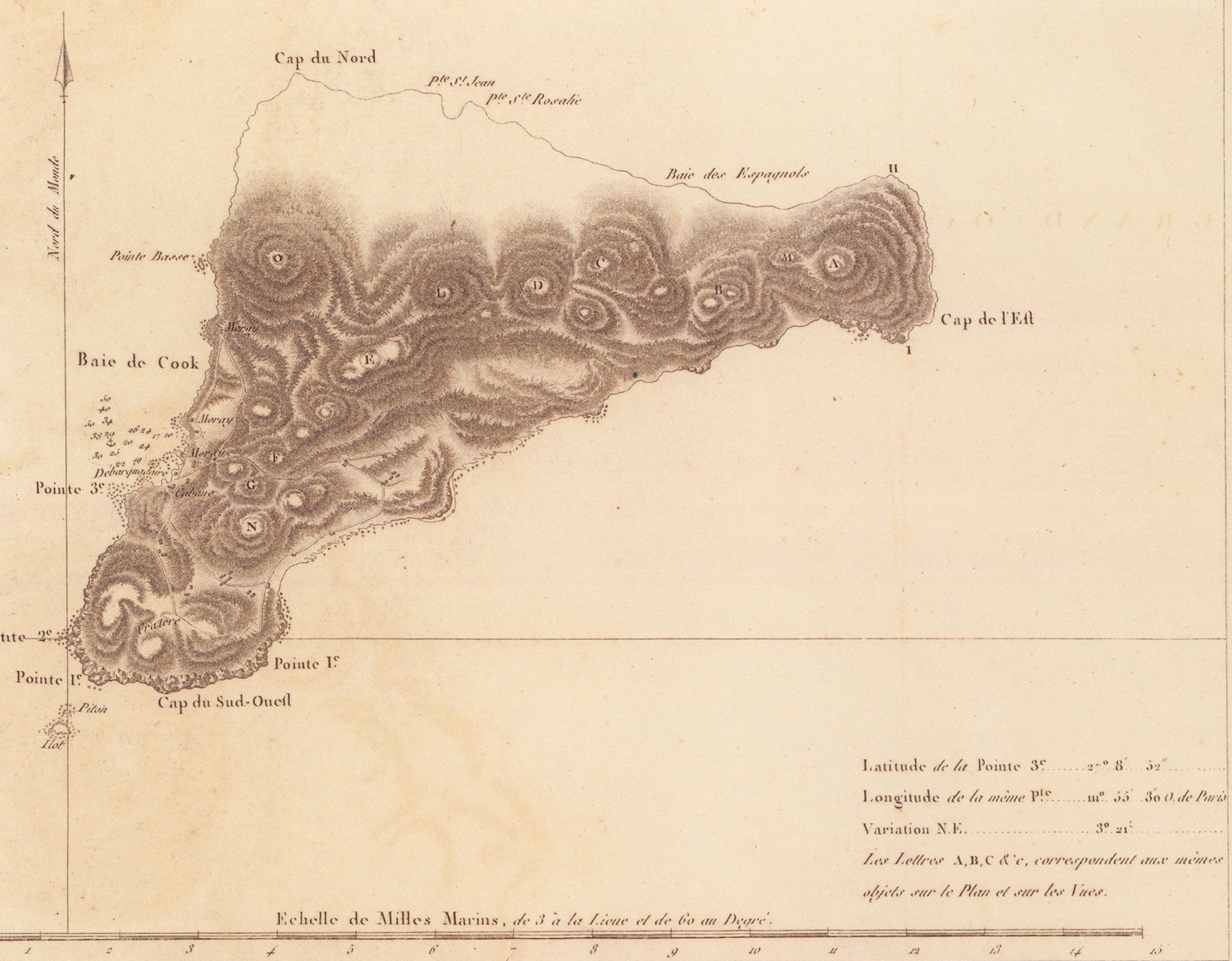


Latitude *de la* Pointe 3e ..... 27° 8′ ..... 52″ .....

Longitude *de la même* Pte ..... 111e. 55′ .30″ O. *de Paris*

Variation N.E. ..... 3e. 21′ .....

Les Lettres A, B, C &c, *correspondent aux mêmes objets sur le Plan et sur les Vues.*

Echelle de Milles Marins, *de 3 à la Lieue et de 60 au Degré.*

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15

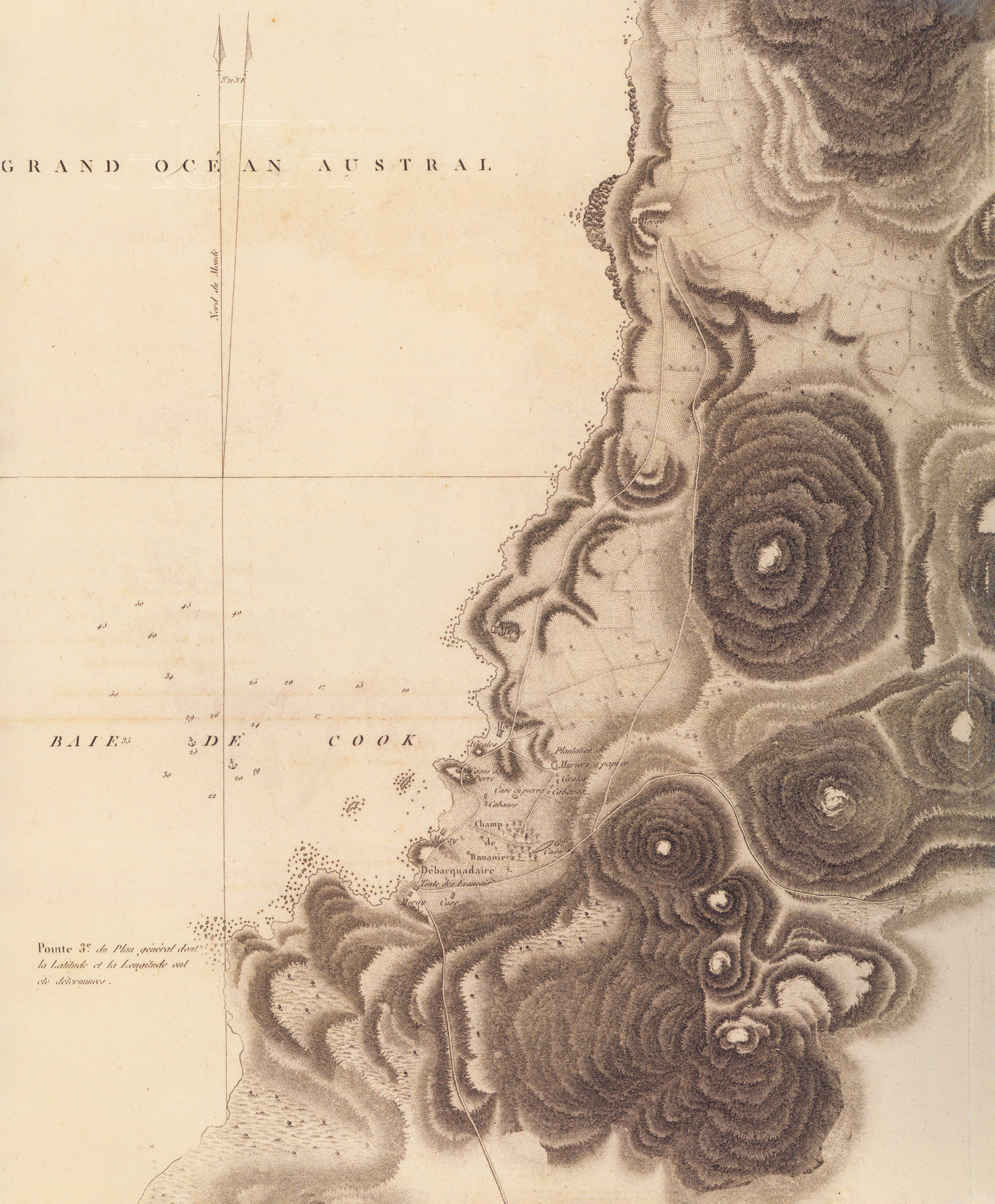
VUES DE L'ÎLE DE PÂQUE.

proportionelles entr'elles et sur une Echelle de 2 pouces par lieue, comme le Plan ci dessus.

1e Vue; A *restant à* O 4e S. *distance* 4 *Lieues; la Pointe* I *à* O ¼ S O 1e O, *et le Cap le plus Nord à* O, 1e 30′ N. *du Compas.*

2e Vue, *le Cap de l'Est, restant au N. distance de* 2 *Lieues, et le Cap du Sud-Ouest à l'O.* 5e *N.*

3e Vue; *le Cap de l'Est restant au N.* 34e 30′ E; *la Pointe Basse au N.* 18e 30′ E; *l'Ilot et Piton au N.* 30e *dist.* 1 *Lieue.*


GRAND OCÉAN AUSTRAL
3e 21 NE
Nord du Monde
BAIE DE COOK
Hauteur
Moray
Cocotiers
Plantation de Mûriers à papier
Case de Pierre
Grotte
Case en paroi et Cabanes
Cabanes
Champ de Bananiers
Moray
Case
Débarquadaire
Tente des Français
Moray
Case
Pointe 3e du Plan général dont la Latitude et la Longitude ont été déterminées.

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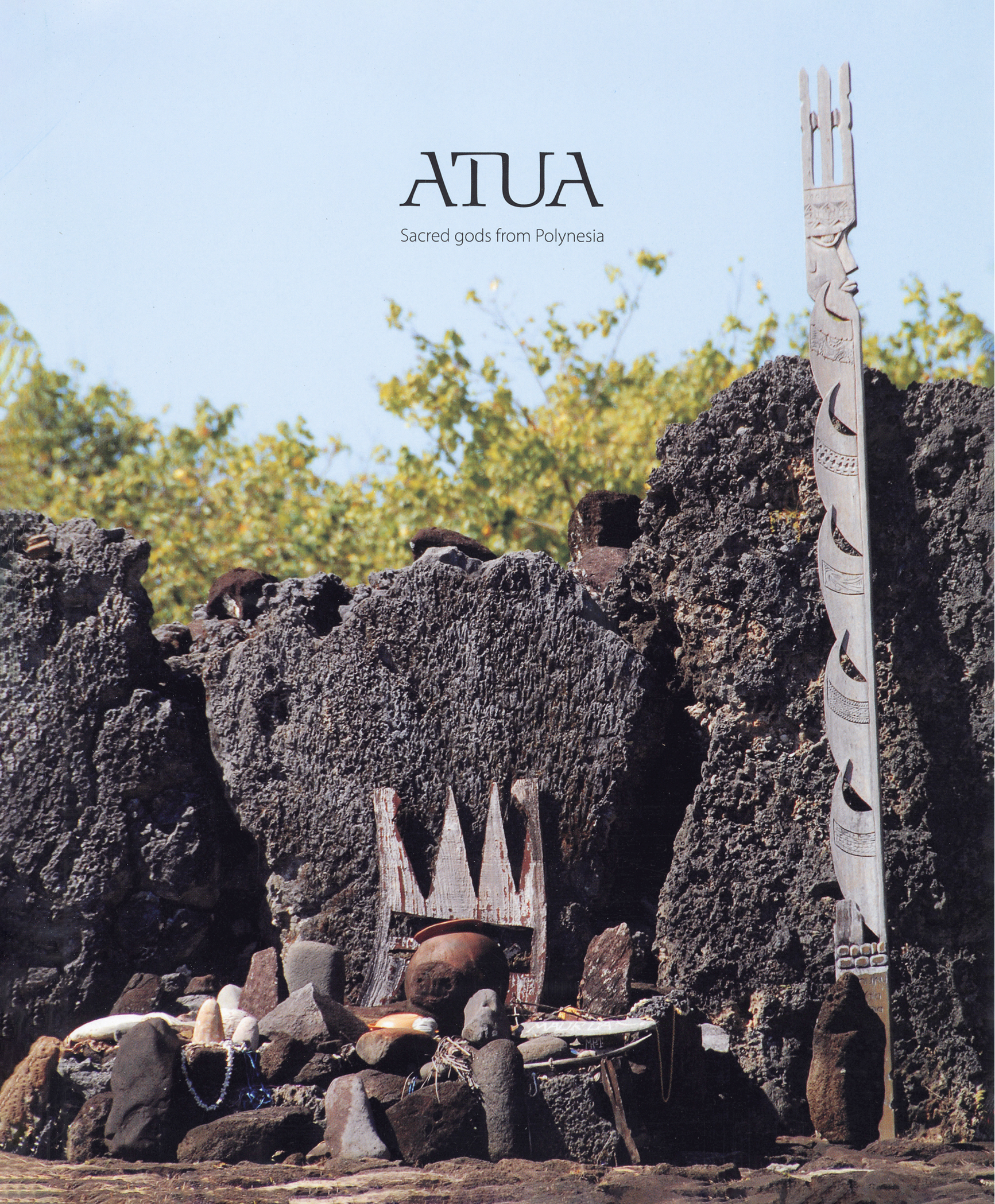


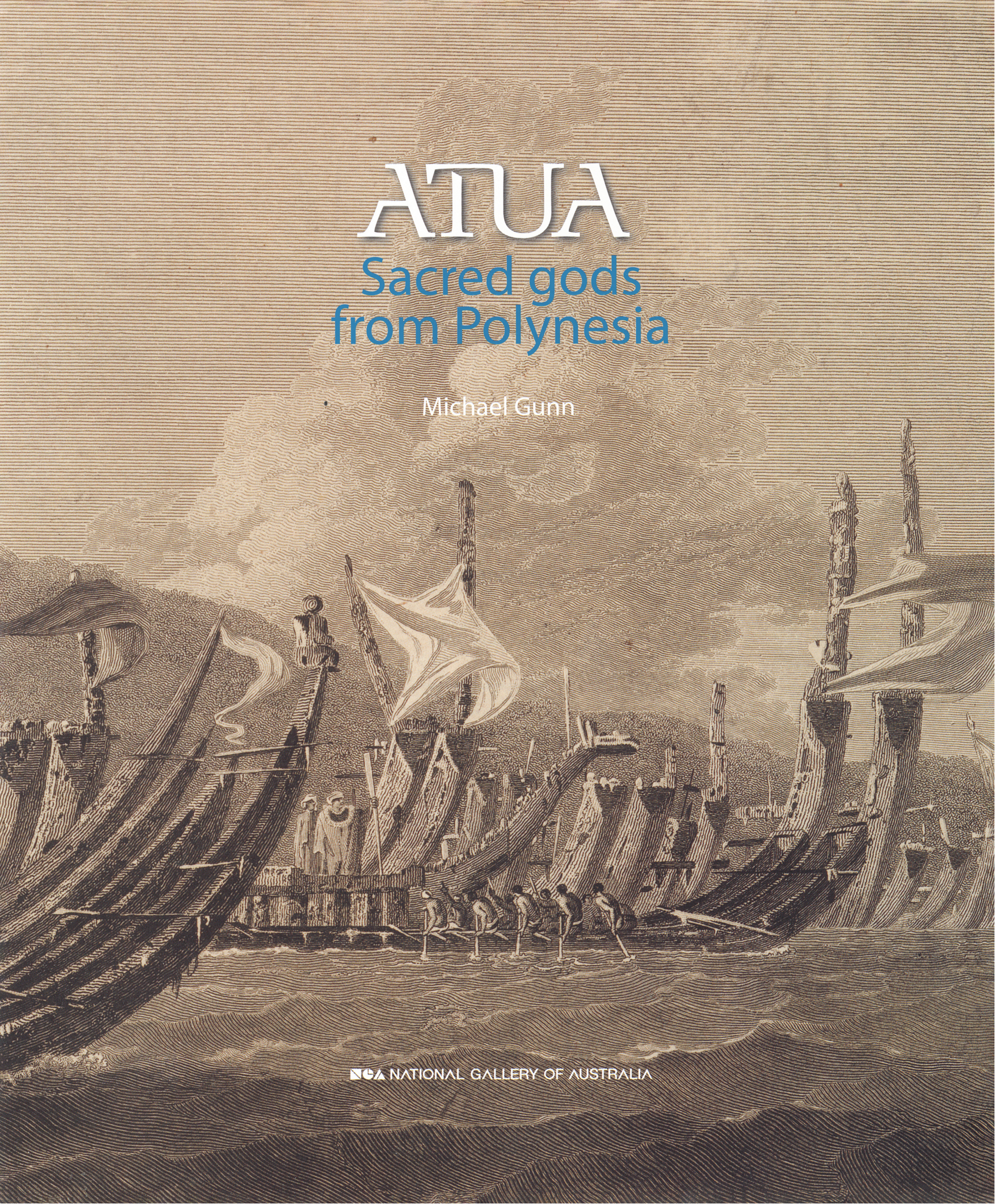
ATUA

Sacred gods from Polynesia

ATUA

Sacred gods from Polynesia

Michael Gunn



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Director's foreword

DIRECTOR'S FOREWORD

There is mystery and power in the unique and distinctive art of Polynesia, in its people's spiritual beliefs and in their history. This exhibition explores in unprecedented depth the Polynesian concept of gods, *atua*—the beings, figurative objects and associated beliefs. It examines these sculptural images island by island, and considers the notions underlying their creation, including what is meant by the word *atua* and why *atua* were so closely associated with Polynesian ancestors.

The emphasis of the exhibition is on the art objects that were the focus of so much belief and attention and which vanished so swiftly when the people abandoned their traditional religion for Christianity. Western missionaries regarded these objects as idols and the vast majority were smashed or burnt in an iconoclasm repeated across the region throughout the early nineteenth century. The few survivors, those taken as souvenirs by explorers, missionaries, the military or traders, are now to be found in museums scattered throughout the world.

The Polynesians were great and brave maritime people who originated from the Southeast Asian archipelago and ventured east in small craft over a period of 3000 years. The survivors of these journeys had exceptional strength and endurance. Although not always considered part of Polynesia, Fiji is the starting point of this exhibition, for the Polynesian people often returned there, either to visit or in attempts to invade. Fiji was also visited repeatedly by peoples from islands further to the west, the nearest of which, Vanuatu, is more than 800 kilometres away. To the east were islands that were uninhabited until the Polynesian peoples found and colonised them. They are now known as Tonga and Samoa, with Niue further to the east.

The people developed these islands about 3000 years ago, made them part of their world, and maintained contact with each other for more than 2000 years. Then they ventured further east and found groups of islands in the central Pacific, including Rarotonga (Cook Islands), the Austral Islands, Tahiti and the Society Islands, the Marquesas Islands, and the huge stretch of atolls that we know as the Tuamotu Archipelago, extending north of Tahiti more than 2000 kilometres south-east to the Pitcairn Islands. Two thousand kilometres further east, the people found Rapa Nui (Easter Island). Far to the north they discovered the Hawaiian islands and, about 750 years ago, Aotearoa New Zealand.

In this world people sailed for months at a time across immense distances, lived on remote islands, and created art objects of ancestral gods so that they could interact with the supernatural world to give them strength and otherwise unattainable knowledge. This other world, generally known as Te Po, had its own hierarchy of beings—*atua*—which varied according to the humans interacting with them. Some of the most powerful and oldest *atua*, such as Tangaroa, could be found throughout Polynesia. Others were less powerful and found in only one location. Some were found in animals, such as centipedes, others in birds. A number were associated with particular parts of the land.

Among these *atua* were the spirits of humans. In Polynesia, in particular, people are remembered after they die. Their names and relationships to others are memorised and used in almost every human interaction. When Polynesian people meet as strangers, they first try to identify a common ancestor, perhaps ten or even 20 generations ago. The nature of that ancestral relationship determines how they begin their new relationship as individuals and as representatives of their people.

Many ancestors, particularly those famous for their invincibility, political strength or ability to cross the ocean and find new lands, came to be deified. Art objects were made and activated in the sacred enclosure: an ancestor could be contacted through the mediation of a priest and asked to help his children, those descendants who were isolated and vulnerable on their atoll. In this way a vital connection was made, one that could last generations.

Beginning in the sixteenth century, Westerners began to infiltrate Polynesia, bringing with them their fervent Christian beliefs, their guns and diseases. Almost every subsequent contact with the islanders resulted in destruction. Their original Polynesian religion was undermined and their art objects destroyed, confiscated or traded away. This cultural annihilation accelerated in the early nineteenth century when missionaries invaded every Polynesian island, intent on suppressing the traditional belief system and replacing it with Western Christianity. During this period most of the works of art in this exhibition were taken to Europe and America as exotic souvenirs, where they were often publicly exhibited as curiosities, and as proof of Western domination. These gods are the survivors, and are now secure in museums throughout the Western world, and they are increasingly recognised for their artistic power and as icons from a rich, almost-vanished culture.

The National Gallery of Australia holds an important and representative collection of the traditional arts of the Pacific. The Gallery's founding document, the 'Lindsay Report' of 1966, made acquisition recommendations that included collecting Pacific arts, not as anthropology, as was traditionally the case, but as art, which was highly unusual in Australia at the time. Melanesian art was first acquired in 1968, specifically the art of New Guinea. The first object from the islands of Polynesia, a Rapa Nui *moai tangata* figure, was acquired in 1970, followed shortly after by many other works from Melanesia and Polynesia. Major objects from the Pacific were prominently displayed when the Gallery opened in 1982. With recent additions of significant works, the Gallery now has a large collection of Melanesian art and a small, but high-quality, collection of early works representing most of the main islands of Polynesia. The Polynesian collection is the only collection of its kind in Australia.

The exhibition *Atua: sacred gods from Polynesia* includes key works from the Gallery's collection and has brought together over 75 pre-Christian Polynesian works of art from almost 30 different international institutions and private collections. Major institutions, such as the British Museum and the Vatican Museum, have gone out of their way to lend their most precious works. Smaller institutions have offered to lend the best pieces in their collections, for they understand that this major exhibition will break new ground and bring pre-Christian Polynesian gods to this part of the world, where people from Polynesia will be able to view their heritage.

We are indebted to the many Polynesian people who have worked over many years with Michael Gunn, Senior Curator, Pacific Arts, and curator of this exhibition, in particular those in Tahiti, Rarotonga, Hawai'i, Tonga, and Aotearoa New Zealand who gave up so much of their time to ensure this exhibition accurately represents essential elements of their cultural heritage. In particular we thank Mahiriki Tangaroa, Eruera Nia, George Nuku, Vairea Teissier, Natea Montillier Tetuanui and her colleagues, and Graham Anderson.

I thank all the institutional and private lenders to this exhibition; without their generosity this pioneering exhibition could not take place.

I especially express my gratitude to Michael Gunn who has worked diligently over many years, grappling with the complex concept of *atua* and choosing the distinctive pieces for the exhibition.

We are pleased to be able to share this groundbreaking exhibition with Saint Louis Art Museum—and I especially thank its Director Brent Benjamin for his foresight.

For making this exhibition financially possible, we record our great appreciation for the generosity of the Gordon Darling Foundation and also the National Gallery of Australia Council Exhibitions Fund, which is made up of personal donations from the Gallery's Council members. We are also pleased to continue our partnership with longstanding sponsors Qantas and Qantas Freight, who have subsidised the freight costs and ensured the safe travel of the international works for the exhibition.

We express our continuing gratitude to the Australian Government for its support through the National Collecting Institutions Touring Outreach Program and the Australian Government International Exhibition Insurance for its assistance with touring this show internationally and insuring it while in Australia.

I also extend my thanks to our Print Partner, Canprint, for helping to produce this high-quality publication and to our Beverage Partners, Chandon and Coopers, for their continued support of the Gallery and its exhibitions program.

Ron Radford

Polynesia
POLYNESIA
Sulpher I.
I. Sebastien de Lobos
the Gardens
Nov.r 18 much Pumice Stone
Urac
Agrigan
Anatajam
Ladrone Isles
Sarvan
Tinian
Guaham
Ban
NEW CAROLINES
I. Amoroset
I. de Cata
St. Augustine
St. Barthelemi
Pescadore Isles
I. de Esteran
I. St. Pierre
I. Necaaae
Turde Seen
A Branch of a Tree seen
Christmas Isle
EQUINOCTIAL LINE
135
165
180
195
SANDWICH I.
O'Neeheow
Atoui
Woahoo
Moratoi
Tahoora
Rauai
Mowee
Owhyhee
Farmingo
PALAOS ISLES
Admiralty I.
NEW IRELAND
Byrons I.
Isles
Bonita
Arrou
Timberland
Maleila
Dampiers I.
Passage
B. Cheiseul
Gores I.
Carteret I.
Port Saville
C. Deliverance
NEW GUINEA
Endeavour Strait
Pr. of Wales's I.
Gulf of Carpentaria
disc.d 1618
Providential Channel
C. Wernouth
C. Flattery
Endeavour R.
C. Tribulation
Trinity Bay
C. Grafton
C. Sandwich
Halfuar Bay
C. Cleveland
Repulse B.
C. Palmerston
Bay of Inlets
Keppel B.
C. Capricorn
Bustard B.
Hervey B.
Sandy Cape
Wide Bay
Clarkhouse B.
C. Morton
P.t Danger
C. Byron
Solitary I.t
Smoky Cape
Nuty's disc.d 1627
Port Stephens
Cape Bank
Botany B.
P.t Solander
C. St. George
Bateman B.
C. Dromedary
C. Howe
P.t Hicks
Furneaux Isles
DIEMANS LAND
Edystone P.t
St. Patrick's Head
Schouten I.t
Mavias Isles
Adventure B.
NEW SOUTH WALES Disc.d 1770
Ridge of Diana
Tierra del Espiritu Santo
Malicollo I.
Aurora I.
Whitsuntide I.
Ambrym
Apee
Sandwich I.
Erromango
Tanna
Erromanga
Balabea
NEW CALEDONIA
C. Colnett
Annetam
C. Coronation
Q. Charlotte's Foreland
I. Pines
NEW HEBRIDES
Norfolk I.d
C. Mar.t Van Diemen
C. North
B. of Islands
C. Brett
I. Barrier I.t
C. Colvill
B. of Plenty
Cape East
Gannet I.
C. Egmont
Table C.
Hawkes B.
NEW ZEELAND
C. Farewell
C. Foulwind
C. Campbell
Banks I.
Cascade P.t
Dusky B.
I. Saunders
Solanders I.
Traps
Some Rock-weed seen
Antipodes of London
D.n of Yorks I.
Solitary I.
Isles of Danger
Gannets Seen
Wallis I
Single I.
Forlorn Hope
Bauman I.
Hope I.
Bestaven or Cocos I.
Keppel or Barrows I.
P.e Williams I.
Palmerston I.
Turde I.
DUKE OF YORKS ISLES
Savage I
Wateoo I.
Mangeea I.
Otheteroa
Trunk of a Tree Seen

GULF OF MEXICO
Bay of Campeche
NEW SPAIN
MEXICO OR
CARIBBEAN S
TIERRA FIRME
NEW GRANADA
GALLAPAGOS ISLES
Bay of Honduras
Isles known by the Spaniards
TROPIC OF CAPRICORN
Isles said to be discovered by the Spaniards 1773.
Piece of Wood Seen
Some Sea weed Seen
Piece of Wood and Sea weed seen
Cordillera des
CHILI
PATAGONIA
Lima
Callao
Valpa
Concep
Baldi
Juan Fernando
Masafuero
Chiloe Is.
Chonos Is.
Madre de Dios I.
C. Corientes
C. Rozo
C. Catoche
C. Escondido
C. Blanco
C. Francisco
C. Marianna
C. Corrientes
C. de la Vela
C. de God
Buenaventura Bay
Porto Bello
Panama
Vera Cruz
Acapulco
P. Angelas
Tecoantepec
Mosquito Coast
Port Royal
JAMAICA
Cuba
Hispaniola
Caymanas
Cayman
Havana
Campeche
Yucatan
Mexico
Callao
Lima
Guayaquil
St Helena
Albemarle I.
Norfolk I.
Wenman I.
I. Gallego
I. Amapala
I. Narborough
St Felix I.
Pitcairns I.
Easter I.
Otaheite
Whitsunday I.
Charlotte I.
Gloucester I.
Cumberland I.
Hood I. S.
St Pedro
St Christian
la Magdalena
Dog I.
Doubtful I.
Resolution I.
Adventure I.
Furneaux I.
Carteret
Sondre arvaad
Maitea
Toobouai I.
Augustine
Morro Hermoso
St Maria la Gorta
Pascares
Loc
Mayes
La Maso
Socorro I.
Roca Partida
La Nublada
Passion I
P. S. Lazare
Farellones
Culiacan
Cinaloa
I. Joseph
B. St Espirit
Lucaya
Mariguana
Inaccessible I.
Mayaguana
Ragged I.
Turks
Caicos
Ginger
Ibacoa P.
Porto Rico
Anguilla
Grenada
Tobago
Trinidad
Margarita
Curaçoa
Coro
Maracaibo
Gulf of Darien
Gulf of Mexico
Bahama Is.
Windward
Dominica
Martinico
Barbadoes
Guiana
Amazons R.
R. Mayro
P. S.
Cordillera des
Chiloe Is.
Chonos Is.
Madre de Dios I.
Juan Fernando
Masafuero
Valpa
Concep
Baldi

SACRED ART FROM POLYNESIA: THE VIEW FROM THE INTERIOR

Many Polynesian people from different island groups were consulted in the creation of this exhibition of Polynesian sacred art. They made it clear that, in thinking about the exhibition, we should try to adopt the Polynesian point of view, the view from the interior.[1]

From a Western perspective, this requires making the conceptual leap of accepting that *atua* (gods) are beings with a presence that have the potential to occupy an object. It can be hard for someone outside that culture to accept and understand the view that an inanimate object can contain a life force.

The art objects of Polynesia—the sculpture, the carvings—were all said to be gods in some form; either they were the god itself, or the place in which a god could rest for a while, or they were the idea of a god, a picture carved in wood.

The presence of the gods imbued the lives of the people of early nineteenth-century Polynesia; they were aware of the god world far away that was, at the same time, right there with them. The gods were forces that affected people and they could be anything that animated the world, made it move, made it angry or loving.

Many gods existed simultaneously, of different sizes and temperaments. Some were small and gentle, others were savage and malicious. Bigger and stronger gods could affect smaller gods, like a storm coming in off the sea, blowing all the others away.

Atua existed in different worlds. In the everyday world, somebody could experience an *atua* every time a bird sang, or when a twig snapped, or in a riffle of the wind on the water. Everything had meaning. Everything had significance.

People spoke about *atua*. They shared their experiences, and at night they sat together and told stories from the past, perhaps the story of a jealous husband and the stranger who arrived on the shore.

The wife wanted him, so she made an offering to her *atua*, her god, which came to her from her grandmother. She gave a small sacrifice, a present. And the man came to her and she was happy.

The men sat together and talked of the threats they faced. They had to know what to do so they could survive. The chief decided that he would speak with the priest. The priest knew how to communicate with the *atua*, he would get the right answer.

The *atua* provided meaning that could be used for guidance. The navigators of Polynesia are legendary for their extraordinary understanding of the ocean as they explored and settled the Pacific, beginning around 3000 years ago. *Atua* were essential for navigation and the Polynesians travelled with confidence because their *atua* knew the way and would protect them on their voyage. Every long-distance canoe took several different *atua* on board, together with a priest to care for them. The first thing to be built in a new land was a sacred enclosure for the *atua* who had travelled on the canoe.

When *atua* were carried from one place to another they were treated with great care, for they were special, magical. Sculptors made an artwork, a carved figure, to contain the *atua* and a special type of priest was responsible for it. This was the only work the priest could do because, when he was in contact with an *atua*, he was no longer a normal human being. Whatever he touched, whether it be a tree or a person, became sacred and had to be destroyed or killed as a consequence, for sacred and profane cannot co-exist.

Throughout Polynesia art objects were made, stored and used in the sacred enclosure—the *marae*, or *heiau*, as it is known in the Hawaiian islands—where *atua* and people interacted through the medium of the objects. The objects were neither decorations or mere status objects, even though to own one was a source of pride and an indicator of status. They were containers, a house for an *atua*, generally

the deified ancestor of the *ariki* (leader) who owned the object. It was his art object and it contained his ancestor's animated presence.

Unlike the Western notion of animation, this animation of an *atua* was in the mind of the person standing in front of the object. An animated object could interact with the person through elicited emotions. This form of communication from the object was known as *mana*. Objects with *mana* could influence hundreds, even thousands of people. Others were more restricted and personal in their communication. Art objects were the most influential of all the *mana*-imbued objects used by priests and *ariki*. By the late-seventeenth century, every island had dozens of sacred enclosures, and hundreds or even thousands of *mana*-imbued art objects—the idols that the missionaries eventually managed to destroy.

These *mana*-imbued art objects were usually referred to as *atua* because they contained a spirit, the *vairua* of a person who had been sacrificed so that the art object could be animated. Once animated, they were kept inside the sacred enclosure, in god-houses, because they were too dangerous to be amongst the general population. Inside the sacred enclosure priests were assigned to keep and nurture one or more *atua*. When war threatened, or disease was decimating the people, the *mana* of the *atua* could be boosted by adding more *vairua*.

Art objects were made in the sacred enclosures under conditions of strict *taboo*. This meant that the artist was secluded from the outside world and would be fed by priests with food brought from the outside by boys or young men.

In some places, the wood used to make the art objects was selected from particular trees of certain species that grew inside the sacred enclosure. Larger objects were made from trees selected in the forest, sometimes a long distance from the sacred enclosure where the object would be housed. Many and possibly most pre-Christian art objects were enlivened through human sacrifice before the tree was cut. The log would be brought to the sacred enclosure under strict *taboo* conditions and secrecy.

By 1830 most of the thousands of art objects that had been kept in sacred enclosures across the Pacific had vanished under the combined onslaught of missionaries, Christian Polynesians, and Western looters. On some islands there were no survivors at all. The orgy of smashing and looting destroyed 1200 years of the artistic creations of an entire people, who lost every material link to their past. All that remained were bibles and tattered clothes; all they managed to keep were their memories and stories.

Of the few pieces that survived, some are wooden sculptures and feathered objects, others feathers and fibre, a few of stone. They are often works of remarkable artistic quality and vary considerably between island groups. It is this unique heritage of a few surviving gods from a lost civilisation that this exhibition seeks to celebrate.

1 In the words of Vairea Teissier in Tahiti, June 2012.

Polynesian gods (Atua)

POLYNESIAN GODS (*ATUA*)

There are, or have been, thousands and perhaps even hundreds of thousands of Polynesian gods.

Archaeology, history and the art objects themselves make it clear that people carried, nurtured and developed the gods. If a god was not amenable to human attention, it was generally discarded, or at least downgraded in status to a local god.

Some gods started off as human beings: a battle-scarred warrior, a charismatic leader, a navigator who found new lands. Over thousands of years and with generations of people worshipping him, this leader eventually became a god.

Others began as movement, or an image, in a rock, an unexplained presence in part of the land. If enough people became aware of this presence, it was accepted as an *atua* and named. Eventually a powerful member of the community would build a sacred enclosure to honour the *atua* and its name became the focus for people and their religious beliefs.

A number of *atua* were the old gods that accompanied the original discoverers and navigators who travelled across the Pacific. Their origins are ancient and their antecedents can be found in the ancestor worship and spirit belief that exists today throughout Melanesia, South-East Asia, and as far north as Taiwan.[1]

Many *atua* were the spirits of gifted individuals who fought their way to the top of their society to become leaders. They conquered their enemies and improved life for their people. These ancestors were the aristocracy, known as *ariki* (*arii*, *alii*, or *po'i tiketike*) throughout Polynesia. Eventually their memory was deified and developed into a tangible presence. Priests kept this presence in a distinctive object, often it was a beautiful work of art sculpted from wood.

As the descendants of these strong and dominant aristocrats travelled by canoe (*vaka*) across the Pacific, the presence of their ancestors travelled with them, encapsulated in objects carried on board. A direct ancestor of the individual who was leader, captain and navigator of the ship, was a god, an *atua*, and they carried that link and presence with them for help and guidance.

Eventually the people found all the islands of the Pacific Ocean and established colonies on most of them. Sometimes the settlers lost the fight to survive, leaving behind the sites of sacred enclosures and occasional art objects that were the repositories for their gods.

Often, though, the colonies thrived, especially those on the bigger islands. The people brought with them coconuts, stone adzes, pigs, dogs, and at least one priest to look after the *atua* and the portable *marae*, the sacred site that was used to communicate with the *atua*.

As well as inheriting knowledge of how to survive on an island, some people inherited the knowledge of how to animate a wooden object, such as a canoe, the statue of an *atua*, or a war club.

Art objects imbued with *mana* were usually referred to as *atua* because they contained the *vairua* or spirit of a person who had been sacrificed in order to animate the object. When war or disease threatened, the presence of the *atua* could be boosted by adding *vairua* through human sacrifice. Leaders and priests gained reputations as bloodthirsty or wanton killers if they made more sacrifices than were seen to be necessary. In the nineteenth century this activity came to the attention of the Christian missionaries, who saw the priests as servants of a bloodthirsty god using heathen idols to control the people.

Gods were political weapons, however, and leaders did use their power to control their communities. A big leader, the *ariki-nui* of an entire island, generally brought his ancient family god with him on his rise to power. If he was waging war, his family god became a war god and, eventually, a national war god. In times of peace, the war

god became an agricultural deity because war was no longer part of his people's life. This was common practice, for war and agriculture are very close in the lives of *atua*.

Navigators setting out for new lands left their homeland as a priest departing from a sacred enclosure. As navigator–priests they carried gods, wrapped for protection during the voyage, and used the gods to help them find new land. After meeting the existing owner of the land and establishing that they shared common ancestors—which was necessary to ensure peace—they carried their gods ashore.

A political leader was also often a priest, especially on smaller islands where he could combine the role of leader with that of intermediary to the other world, and thus avoid the problem of relying on a priest who did not share his ambitions or had the wrong ancestral connections.

In much of Polynesia, people distinguished between the world that humans live in (Te Ao—the world of light) and the world of the gods (Pulotu in western Polynesia and Te Po in eastern Polynesia). Pulotu was on an island, which no-one has been able to find, to the north-west of Tonga; Te Po was in Havaiki, which some think on linguistic grounds was Savaii in Samoa, but it is just as likely to be the location which encloses the sacred *marae* of Taputapuatea on Raiatea.

Some *atua* are known throughout much of Polynesia, and others are restricted to one island group or archipelago. Lesser-known gods were more localised and have often been forgotten.

The names of the old gods were more likely to be appropriated by those in power because they had superior ancestry and the strongest *mana*. These old gods continue to exist primarily in stories, as heroes and gods from the past, with stereotyped associations—Tangaroa, the god of the sea; Tu, the war god; Rongo, the war god; and Tane, the god of the forest.

Regional *atua* include Kahukura, Maru, Make-Make, and Tiki Puaikanui. Some, from evidence which can be easily identified in stories from various island groups, began life as a person around 800 to 1000 years ago, eventually becoming a deified ancestor and an *atua*.

Christian missionaries in the late-eighteenth century first promulgated the idea of *atua* as evil spirits, and this misrepresentation has persisted for more than 200 years. The missionaries perceived the art objects as idols, an image of a god that was not their god, and they were determined to replace the traditional belief system with their own.

To undermine the people's belief in themselves and their traditions, missionaries exploited the rigid hierarchy of Polynesian society by seeking to influence the *ariki*. When an *ariki* spurned the old ways, his people had little option but to follow.

Once he had converted, the chief *ariki* would burn his art objects, *atua*, god houses, and all the buildings in his sacred enclosure.

Art objects associated with ancient *atua*, such as Tangaroa, Rongo, Tu and Tane, were burnt because they belonged to first-line *ariki*, who were the first to be converted by the missionaries. Those belonging to lesser *ariki* who were living in outlying areas withstood the missionary influence longer, and their art objects were not so completely destroyed. Other surviving art works might have been owned by *ariki* who destroyed some of their *atua* in order to establish credibility with the missionaries, and hid others as a back-up in case the new religion failed.

Once people realised that their old gods were not going to kill them when they converted to the new religion, they turned on the *marae* in fury, leaving only smouldering wreckage. Western looters removed most of the remaining cultural evidence.

Today, it is the stories and museums that are repositories of much of the Polynesian cultural and spiritual heritage. All the images of Rongo and Tane were destroyed, three or four images of Tangaroa have survived as shapeless pieces of whalebone or wood, and perhaps two or three images of Tu remain.

The gods of the stories are not the same as the gods in the art objects, these wooden, feathered, or stone items. Gods in stories are strong and powerful, remote and intimate, infinitely flexible. They come from the past and exist in the dialogue between people.

Gods in art objects can exist independently of people, and thrive on human attention. They were put in the art objects by people, carried about by people, and used by people for human purposes.

1 Many researchers, especially linguists, have traced the ancestors of the Polynesian people back to the original speakers of several Austronesian languages on the island of Taiwan, more than 4000 years ago. It is likely that the pre-Taiwanese origins lay on the mainland of east Asia, where the Han Chinese people live today.

Sacred enclosures

SACRED ENCLOSURES

During the Archaic Phase of eastern Polynesia, which began around 1200 years ago, Polynesian explorers sailed vast distances, locating and then colonising islands. For the following 400–500 years, the colonisers maintained communication and trade links with their places of origin.

It was during this period that people established small sacred enclosures to house *atua*. The enclosures were not permanent or substantial and have left no archaeologically identifiable traces. They are known from oral histories.

Later, in the Classic Phase, people began to look away from their outside connections and to focus more on problems within their own islands. Population growth put pressure on resources so raiding and warfare became more prevalent. People began to move inland to defensible locations in the upper reaches of valleys, away from the more easily raided coastal villages. They developed a stronger interest in agriculture and less in fishing.

Organised religion became more important, and this resulted in the development of permanent sacred enclosures, which included large *marae* platforms and associated structures. Similarities between these constructions show that communication between islands throughout eastern Polynesia continued into the Classic Phase. Long distance priest–navigators, such as Tangiia, Hiro, and Kupe, who sailed out from the Society Islands, established their religious system on many of the islands throughout eastern Polynesia.

The beginning of the Classic Phase can be identified archaeologically by the appearance and proliferation of religious enclosures: *marae, me'ae, ahu, heiau*, or *langi*, depending on the island group and who owned them. These constructions were paved with stone or coral slabs. Recent archaeological work suggests that the development of ritual architecture first began on Rapa Nui in the thirteenth century and, by the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, was widespread throughout eastern Polynesia, extending as far north as Hawai'i[1]. During the Classic Phase, regional art and cultural styles developed, consolidated, then began to fragment. The Classic Phase lasted until the beginning of the Christian period at the end of the eighteenth century.

Before Christian missionaries arrived, sacred enclosures were the architectural heart of Polynesian society. Owned by the *ariki*, the leaders and aristocracy, who understood themselves to be acting on behalf of the people, there was generally one in every village and sometimes several. Some enclosures were associated with public arenas, some with dancing grounds. Most were also burial grounds for the sacred people: the chiefs, their families, and the priests. It was in this period that the *marae* became the central location for ritual and communication with ancestors and other *atua*.

Other less high-status individuals also established sacred enclosures for the *atua* that would have accompanied their ancestors on their journeys from other islands. Enclosures could host one or several *atua*, especially if the community possessed the *atua* of several influential *ariki* (to eject an *ariki*'s *atua* was to eject the *ariki* and, in effect, start a war). The sacred enclosure of a politically active *ariki* might host the art objects and *atua* of several *ariki* who, although more junior, had the potential to secede and fragment the senior *ariki*'s power.

A conquering invader would either destroy the sacred enclosures of his former enemies, or ritually cleanse them of the pollutants of his predecessor's occupation and install his own gods. It seems that the *atua* were transported from one location to another inside an art object.

The enclosures varied from island to island, and even between localities. Each was unique, although they shared common elements.

The interiors were usually paved with smooth flat-topped basalt stones or small boulders. Some featured vertical stone slabs set in the middle of the pavement. These were seats or seat backs for high-ranking chiefs, for this was the primary venue to demonstrate divine authority and power. Enclosures ranged in size from a few metres in diameter up to 30 x 100 metres and many were surrounded on at least three of four sides by stone or coral slabs, set vertically into the ground, which were sometimes more than a metre tall.

The enclosures were never fully covered, although most contained buildings to house the priests and the art objects. Women were usually banned, particularly from the sacred area, which was separate and generally ran the width of the enclosure. It was sometimes raised, sometimes by up to several metres, over a few levels. This raised area was often known as *ahu*.

Immediately in front of the *ahu*, at the core of the enclosure, was an altar where people interacted with *atua*. The art objects were placed here when they were to be activated by a priest. Normally they were kept in a small house off to the side of the enclosure.

The interaction often included human sacrifice, usually of men from the lowest social class. Seized, stunned and carried to the sacred enclosure, they were killed as a sacrifice to an *atua* in a ritual that was held before the art object. Near the altar in most sacred enclosures were pits or troughs for the corpse, identifiable by the distinctive odour of rotting human flesh. If humans were sacrificed in honour of an *atua*, the *atua* would gain strength and *mana,* and would be more willing to help its owner, particularly if the owner were one of its descendants.

The sacrifices stopped when the chiefs converted to Christianity and either gave their art objects to the missionaries or had them burnt. The people set fire to the buildings associated with the sacred enclosures, uprooted the paving and destroyed as much as they could in an orgy of revenge. They wanted to forget the past and go into the new world of London fashions and the Christian god. The enclosures were in ruins.

Fortunately, a reasonably good record of the names, locations and construction of enclosures on some islands was compiled by archaeologist Kenneth Emory in the 1930s in the Society Islands, and publisher Thos G Thrum in the early twentieth century for the Hawaiian Islands. Some of the early nineteenth-century missionaries were excellent observers, describing the interior of a number of sacred enclosures that were still active.

The names of the sacred enclosures varied, but none seems to have held the name of an *atua*. By the early twentieth century, most of the names were forgotten and the enclosures were overgrown, the foundations uprooted by trees and thickets. Stones that had once been part of an altar were used to make secular buildings or fire pits. Some enclosures, with the perimeter walls still standing, had houses built inside them, the walls acting as a convenient fence to keep pigs out. The sacred nature of the enclosures vanished.

1 Summarised in Solsvik & Wallin 2010.

Tane's story

TANE'S STORY

Tane is one the oldest gods in eastern Polynesia. His name means man, husband. In Hawaiian mythology he is Kane, one of the four principal gods, including Ku, Lono, and Kanaloa. He is a major mythological figure in the Society Islands, the Marquesas Islands, and in Aotearoa New Zealand. Today Tane is identified in New Zealand as the guardian of forests and birds. He has a similar role in Hawai'i.

An image of a god is the god himself, as far as the owner is concerned, and the symbol of a well-connected owner. The better connected a leader, the more confident he is, the better the decisions he makes and the more his people love him. To own a major god, an image of a major god, makes a leader special, strong and independent.

When the Christian missionaries arrived they wanted to burn everyone's gods. They understood that the gods made people strong and independent and that this was a major cause of war. So they attacked the gods, rooted them out, and destroyed the images. Very few survived.

In 1821 Rev Daniel Tyerman of the London Missionary Society visited the region around Maeva village, on the north-eastern side of the island of Huahine in the Society Islands. Seeking to humiliate the local priests so that they would stop resisting the movement of the people toward Christianity and Western ways, he interrogated the priest who had been responsible for the safety of the wood figure of Tane; zealots had burnt the actual image of Tane four years earlier in 1817. Tyerman recorded his observations in his diary; this record is one of the few written descriptions of how a Polynesian god was used by the people.

While it is not known when Tane first came to Maeva, this *atua* would have been brought there by a war leader, an *ariki*, who eventually dominated Huahine and established his control by dividing the island into eight districts, each headed by a member of his family. This *ariki* became king, and his *atua*—Tane—was established as the father of all the *atua* on the island. So long as the *ariki* and his family controlled the island, Tane controlled the *atua* world.

The *ariki* and his descendants established and maintained a traditional Polynesian system of control. Once a month, the king held a meeting with the eight district chiefs and their advisors in his sacred *marae* on the summit of the hill beside the sacred mountain. The *marae* was built around 1550, probably just after Huahine came under the king's control. Each chief had a seat in the southern part of the courtyard. Tane was kept in the northern part of the courtyard, in a small wooden house raised on poles.

Tane was made of wood, about the size and shape of a stout man, with an inverted cone below his torso. Wrapped in braided sennit and containing relics from the past, Tane's long tail, like that of a comet or meteor, held many prayers that had been given to him to keep and consider.

Tane was brought out when the king needed him and placed on a stone table in the centre of the *marae*. Sometimes he was taken to the top of the sacred mountain where the king's wife had a small *marae*.

A thick wall, three metres high, extended three kilometres around the sacred part of the mountain, protecting the *marae* where Tane was kept, as well as several other *marae*, gardens, freshwater springs and houses. The *marae*, Tane and the king were guarded by many warriors.

Once a year, Tane was carried down the hill to an area near the village of Maeva for the *pa'i-atua* ritual, which was organised by the king of Huahine. It took place in Manunu, a big *marae* that was hidden in a forest on the other side of the lagoon. Tane, the protective *atua*, the tutelary god, had pride of place in the middle of the display platform (*avaa*), directly in front of the main altar, the *ahu*. Four other *atua*, the gods from each of Huahine's eight districts, were placed each side

of him; handled by their own priests. The chiefs stood in front of their *atua*. Tane was lord of them all, surrounded by priests.

After ceremonies and prayers, the priests stripped the god figures of their old sennit vestments, which were dropped into a pit under a flagstone near the altar. Those god figures that were able to contain other objects were refilled with beautiful feathers and other precious items. All were dressed in new sennit clothes.

Only men were permitted to attend this ceremony and women and children were banned on pain of death. Once *pa'i-atua* ended, the men from all eight districts took part in a three-day feast hosted by the king. They drank kava and between 80 and 100 pigs were slaughtered, roasted and eaten. At the end of the feast, an image of an *atua* named Maavai was brought out, stripped and emptied like the others. When it began to rain it was the sign for all the newly clad images, including Tane, to be taken back to their respective *marae*.

This way of life was initially destabilised in 1811, when the high priest of Huahine and the king's son went to the island of Mo'orea to help Pomare II re-establish his position as king of Tahiti and Mo'orea. At Mo'orea they fell under the influence of the Christian missionaries and they converted in 1813. The Christian influence grew stronger and in 1815 they fought and won a battle against the traditional believers at Puna'auia in Tahiti. Mahine, the king of Huahine, was convinced that Christianity was the way of the future and the old way was doomed. He sent a message to the people of Huahine ordering the destruction of the old gods. Many of the priests followed his order, but a group in Maeva resisted and maintained the old ways. In 1817, the Christians, including people from Tahiti and the other Society Islands, formed an army to attack the remaining priests of the old order.

When the traditional believers were preparing to defend themselves from attack by the Christians, they brought their image of Tane down from the *marae* on the hill and placed him on a stone on the edge of the lagoon, about a kilometre from a sacred tree. This stone was most likely called Tinomana, and was brought from Rarotonga many generations before. On realising that defeat was imminent, they accepted their opponents' offer to make peace if they would hand over their god. The Christians immediately lit a fire, threw Tane's image into it and he was burnt to ashes. Then they went to his *marae* up on the hill and burnt the buildings there, including Tane's house.

Atua and navigation

ATUA AND NAVIGATION

Polynesian navigators between 600–1400 AD travelled vast distances across the ocean. From Tahiti to the Cook Islands, further west to Samoa then Tonga, south along the Kermadec Trench to Rangi-tahua (Raoul Island), then further south to Aotearoa New Zealand, a distance of more than 5300 kilometres. The journey was undertaken not just once, but probably dozens of times.

This confidence on the open ocean was still apparent in 1768 when Louis de Bougainville referred to Samoa as the Navigator Islands because of the number of people he saw sailing small canoes far from the sight of land.

Early Polynesian captains used an array of navigation techniques, including knowledge of the stars and their patterns, the habits and migration patterns of birds, and understanding how nearby islands influence wave patterns and how islands affect weather. They knew that the migration routes of whales, from their breeding grounds near Tonga, south along the Kermadec Trench to hunt for squid, brought them close to the large landmass of New Zealand. A captain could follow pods of whales, which were visible as they surfaced, heading south-south-west.

Accounts of these epic voyages were recorded and collected from many different sources at the end of the nineteenth century. Oral histories (*korero*) were passed down generation to generation by people with extraordinary memories. Cross-referencing between the various accounts of voyages with the findings of archaeologists, linguists and archaeobotanists has confirmed the validity of much of the oral history as an accurate record of the period.

A startling finding in the oral histories is the presence of *atua* on these voyages. Wood figures are visible in most nineteenth- and twentieth-century drawings of Polynesian sailing craft, but the role of these figures is only now fully appreciated. Each figure contained at least one *atua* in a working relationship with the *ta'unga* (priest or priests), an essential crew member on every long-distance sailing vessel.

It is clear that *atua* were transported by canoe, and moved from island to island. What is not so clear is the form in which they were moved around and the role they played. Late-nineteenth and early twentieth century oral histories do, however, give some insight into the nature of the relationship between the *atua*, the canoe and the people.

Certain types of *atua* were transported with people, in canoes. They appear to have been physically taken on the canoes as the final load. It is not yet known how they were contained or secured. In accounts where the *atua* are named, it is clear that between three and five *atua* were taken in the one canoe on each voyage. It seems most likely that each *atua* had its own distinct container, which implies that the containers were art objects of one form or another. These types of *atua* were deified ancestors.

Other types of *atua* accompanied the canoe as helpers and could roam about the canoe while at sea. In one account, an *atua* helped rescue a man who had been thrown overboard by the captain.

Some *atua* were used for navigation; for example, on the canoe *Tainui*, which came from central Polynesia to Aotearoa New Zealand, 24 people were listed as the crew, including the *ariki*–priest Rakataura. Judging by the names that occur in the narrative, there were several women on board. One was listed as Te Peri, a female *patupaiarehe*[1] whose place was in the bow to act as a directing *atua*. Te Peri was the sister of Tainui, a man who was buried at the foot of the tree from which the canoe, which took his name, was made.[2] In Hawai'i, to enliven *atua* images, a human would be sacrificed then buried at the foot of a tree that was to be used to create an artwork (p 155).

Atua could also be used to rescue canoes. When the great leader Turi migrated from Rangiatea (Rai'atea in the Society Islands) on the *Aotea*

around 1350 he brought with him four *atua*—Maru, Te Ihinga-o-te-rangi, Kahu-kura and Rongo-mai—as well as two *atua ririki* (minor gods)—Haere-iti and Rehua—and three named *mana* (Huna-kiko, Kohatu-mua and Kohatu-te-ihi). The *mana* were all stones or *whatu*, made by men of old, much carved and very precious.

The *Aotea* began to sink when she was near the Tongan archipelago. Turi used a *karakia* (prayer or incantation) that asked two *atua* to work together, one was Maru, an *atua* he had brought with him on the voyage, the other was Tangaroa, a *tipua* or helper:

> Maru! *a ka hura* (open up (the waves))
> Tangaroa! *unuhia!* (withdraw her (the canoe))[3]

Canoes were used to transport *atua* from one location to another. *Atua* were specifically mentioned as part of the saga of the great navigators Tangiia, Iro (Hiro) and Tutapu around the year 1450. When Iro and Tutapu decided to leave Rarotonga for Tahiti, Iro placed his *atua* (Rongo, Tangaroa, and Tane) on board Tutapu's canoe. Tutapu arrived at Tahiti, and Iro at Iva, indicating that Iro trusted his *atua* with Tutapu.[4]

Young sailors were encouraged to nurture their connection with the *atua* of heroic navigators of the past. An oral tradition recorded on Rurutu in the Austral Islands speaks of the young hero Amaiterai about to take to the sea in his canoe to enrich his knowledge and find a wife. His father suggests that he follow the advice of the priests and place 'strings' (*taura*) in several locations on his canoe to protect him against storms and winds. Each of these 'strings' carries a name derivative of Iro (Hiro), the legendary navigator from Raiatea in the Society Islands.[5]

A common pattern in the oral histories is for different types of *atua* to help guide canoes across the open ocean. For example, mystery surrounded the remarkable sailing powers of the canoe *Takitumu*, which travelled from Tahiti (via Rarotonga) to Aotearoa New Zealand. On her first voyage,[6] the canoe was so sacred that she could only carry men of the highest rank—first-line *ariki*—and their gods. Food had to be left behind and it was not long before the men went mad with hunger.[7]

The *Takitumu* was known to have been guided during this first voyage by 12 *atua:*

- Ruamano, a type of *atua* known as a *tipua*, led the way across the trackless ocean.
- Arai-te-uru guarded the wake.
- Tutara-kauika and Wehenga-kauhi were on either side.
- Far ahead, Kahukura (in his personified form of a rainbow), stood on high as a guide mark during the day.
- At night, Kahukura went to the stern of the Takitumu and his sister, Hine-korako, went forward to take his place. She was a female being, the personified form of a lunar phenomenon, a bow or halo. She was a kind of protector spirit connected to childbirth.[8]
- Tunui-a-te-ika moved far ahead and returned to tell of the nearness to land.
- In addition, Hine-kotea, Hine-makehu, Hine-korito and Hine-huruhuru were there to guard and guide.
- Harua-tai also guided Takitumu.[9]

These 12 *atua* travelled to Aotearoa New Zealand with the *Takitumu* and made their home there.

According to Rawiri Makaua, one of the most learned Maori leaders, an additional seven *atua* came in the *Takitumu* as passengers: Tahaia, Tukopiri, Te Whenuapo, Tu-nui-o-te-ika, Tara-kumukum, Poro-hinaki, and Tama-i-waho.[10]

Te Rangi Hiroa noted[11] that the oral histories of the main voyages to Aotearoa New Zealand record the *Takitumu* bringing seven *atua*, the *Aotea* brought four, and the *Kurahaupo* brought three. Hiroa did not include the *atua ririki* (minor gods).

A number of accounts refer to canoes that turned towards the sunset, were lost and never returned, whereas those that kept travelling towards the sunrise survived. It is possible that a literal translation of this imagery is misleading, and that it is more likely to mean the crew was turning towards death. Navigation, focuses on sunrise, on life.

1 It is not clear if she is a living human or another type of being. She was certainly a communicator between the world of *atua* and that of the captain of the ship. The *patupaiarehe* were generally recorded in English as sprites or fairies.
2 Gudgeon 1892, p 224.
3 Tautahi & Taipuhi 1900, pp 219–20.
4 Te Rei 1917.
5 Lavondès 1996, p 323.
6 On her second voyage she was renamed *Horouta*.
7 Gudgeon 1892, p 227.
8 Best 1922, p 22.
9 Best 1922, p 29, 52.
10 Gudgeon 1903, p 53.
11 Hiroa 1949.

Catalogue of works

Catalogue of works

Fiji

FIJI

Throughout its complex history, Fiji has been a bridge between the islands of the Western Pacific, in particular those of Vanuatu, 800 kilometres to the west, and Tonga (western Polynesia) 400 kilometres to the south-east. Even in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, Fiji received numerous migrations from the west, and endured a series of complex relationships with invading and visiting Tongans that left a lasting artistic legacy, particularly in works created from whale ivory.

The three Fijian figures in this exhibition illustrate the range of art styles in Fiji at the beginning of the nineteenth century, when contact with the West intensified. These figures are known in the West as *matakau* ancestor figures, but it is not known if this generic name was widespread in Fiji before it was adopted by Europeans.

All three of these freestanding wood figures appear to have been portraits of specific aristocratic women, although the only figure whose circumstances are known is the one now at the Smithsonian Institution (p 26).

Analysis of the 23 known freestanding wood figures reveals there were at least five distinct wood-carving traditions used on Fiji in the early nineteenth century. The context in which these figures were used is not clear. Wesleyan missionary Rev John Williams wrote in 1848 that the Fijiians did not worship images; he did, however, record them as paying respect to some large stones that were the subject of stories and, on feast days, they would send a portion of food to these stones.[1]

1 Larsson 1960, p 13, quoting a letter from Williams to the children of the Wesleyan Sunday School in his native town of Horncastle in Lincolnshire.

FEMALE FIGURE

Fiji
early 19th century
wood, bark cloth
40 cm

National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, E 2998

This image of a young adult woman has the remains of a bark-cloth turban wrapped around her head and trailing down her back. She is naturalistic to the extent that she is asymmetrical: her right eye is lower than her left and the left side of her mouth slopes slightly down. Her eyes bulge a little and, in certain light, they appear to look downward, which is possibly an effect of the incised line that is visible across the middle of each eye. Her body is muscular, particularly the calves, and her pose is striking—her right hand reaches toward her opened genitalia, and her left hand is behind her buttocks.

The circumstances in which this work was found and removed are known, which is unusual for a sculpture from this period. The figure was purchased in 1840 by Titian Ramsay Peale, a member of the United States Exploring Expedition, for a quantity of vermillion (a brilliant red pigment made from mercury sulphide, cinnabar). At that time, Fiji was beginning to experience major changes as the Western presence increased:

> On the way from Vaturua to Matainole,[1] a piece of consecrated ground was passed, on which were mounds of stone, with a rude idol, dressed with a turban and the Feejee hair-pins. The idol was surrounded by clubs set up edgewise, and many spears, arrows, trinkets, cocoa-nuts, &c., lay around, which had evidently been placed there as offerings. A large party of natives, who were with our gentlemen, on seeing them approach it, deserted, excepting a man and boy, who, contrary to the others, seemed anxious for them to partake of the offerings which lay about, and offered to sell the idol, which was bought for a paper of vermilion. Neither of them, however, could be tempted to touch a single article himself, although they had no objection to our gentlemen doing so. On the next day, Mr. Peale returning from his jaunt, took his purchase and carried it on board.[2]

A more colourful account made its way into the Smithsonian Institution's official record:

> An original tag for this figure reads: 'Bua Bay, Vanua Levu, figurine, was obtained in a consecrated grove at Sandal Bay on the Island of Vanua Levu' where a numerous party of natives had been slain and eaten. Many such figures were set up and ornamented with turbans, hairpins and arms (weapons) of the dead, around the mound where this idol was obtained. None of the natives could be persuaded to approach the spot.[3]

It is not known who this figure represents, why she was there and why the people walked away, leaving her to be sold to foreigners. The available facts indicate that the image depicts an aristocratic woman, for the white tapa around the head, now unravelled, was worn by chiefs.[4]

In Tonga, clubs were deposited in temples where it was understood they became the personal possessions of the deity. In this way they gained *mana* that made them more successful when used against enemies.[5] Given Fiji's long interrelationship with Tonga, and the state of civil war in which the US expedition found the island of Vanua Levu in 1840, it is possible that this female figure was the image of a specific and successful deified ancestor, and that her *mana* was used to increase the power of weapons and make them more effective in warfare.

1 Over one kilometre inland in the middle of three rivers, Mbua (today Bua) Bay, western Vanua Levu.
2 Wilkes 1845, p 215.
3 Smithsonian record, Ethnology 2998, SI-MNH-175A 5-3-65.
4 Wilkes 1845, p 47.
5 Mills 2007, pp 107–08.

FEMALE FIGURE

Fiji
probably from the Rewa River region, Viti Levu
19th century or earlier
wood, traces black paint, shell, fibre
55.9 cm

Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, United Kingdom, 1918A17.24

This portrait of a young adult woman is said to have come from the central highlands of the largest Fijian island, Viti Levu. She was collected by Walter and Herbert Chamberlain in the 1870s when they bought the tiny island of Naitauba in the northern Lau Group of Fiji to establish a cotton plantation, although it is not known how she got to Naitauba. She has a lively and powerful presence that is emphasised by her robust, almost massive, features. The eyes in her large expressive face are set in square sockets, the left eye being lower than the right. The balance is restored by the placement of the ears with the left ear higher than the right. Her nose is strong and straight; her mouth open. The remnants of black paint on her face could indicate that she may have been associated with or represented aristocracy.[1]

Her sloping shoulders and strong arms are connected to her body by a developed collarbone; her neck is not visible. Her breasts are small and naturalistic. Her body is painted black below the navel, possibly to depict the tattoo that was commonly applied to young women before marriage.[2] Her legs are comparatively short and the separated feet give the impression that she is walking. Her arms have been carved with a zigzag, double elbow joint.

Her shell necklace is most likely to have been imported from the Solomon Islands, to the west, and the skirt may have been added to shield her pubic region from Western eyes.

The painted sections, the strong sense of personality and the life-like portrayal of her body indicate that this figure was created as a portrait of a real woman.

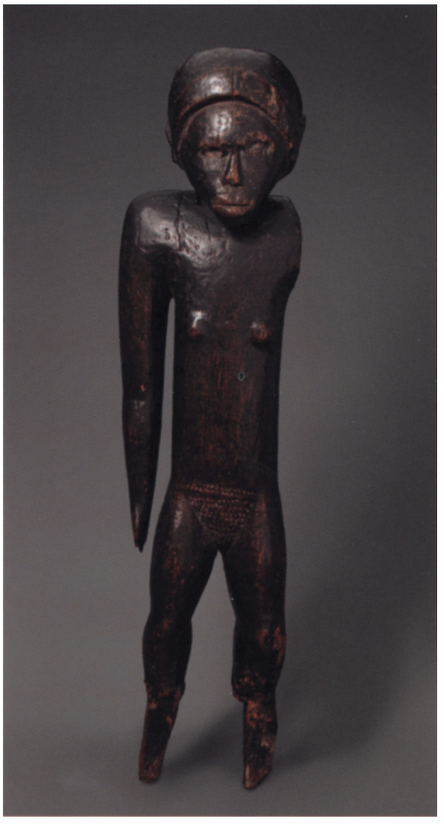
Only one related figure is known, a female figure with similar eyes and the characteristic zigzag arms, obtained in the Rewa district of Viti Levu by Baron Anatole von Hügel around 1875,[3] 'given by a half-caste girl from Mbau as her portrait'.[4]

1 Wilkes (1845, p 47) described Tui Levuka, the chief of Levuka town, meeting US naval officers while wearing a white tapa turban and with his face painted.

2 Larsson 1960, p 42, referring to Thomson 1908, p 217.

3 Now in the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, Cambridge University. Z 2869. Published in Larsson 1960, p 47, fig 16.

4 Larsson 1960, p 34.



FEMALE FIGURE

Fiji
19th century or earlier
wood
57.5 cm
Museum Victoria, Melbourne, X 2530

This female figure, which is most likely to be the earliest surviving Fijian wood figure, possibly dates from the eighteenth century; however, she was part of a tradition of creating ancestor figures that probably arrived in Fiji with the first inhabitants 3000 years ago.

Her expressive face, despite its battering over the years, is enlivened by the positioning of her left eye a little higher than the right. This affects the position of her cheeks and, as a consequence, the relationship of the mouth to the rest of her face.

The clearly delineated band that arches over her forehead from earlobe to earlobe, defining the hair and framing the face, is covered with a thick layer of brown paint.

Her left ear is relatively large and, on the right side of her head, a headdress would have rested, angling back from the ears at 45 degrees, then rising vertically. At the top of her head a horizontal slot, several centimetres deep, may have supported an additional headdress.

She is the image of a young adult. The marks on her waist and in her pubic region most likely represent a pattern that was commonly tattooed on young women before marriage.[1]

Her lower legs were modified to hold the figure upright in a mounting system, either a wooden platform, or something as simple as two bamboo tubes pushed into the earth. Despite this, the legs have also retained the dark brown pigment that was rubbed over her body. Although her left arm is missing, the stump has also been coloured dark brown, which suggests that she was freshly coloured each time she was used, and that her arm was lost relatively early in her life.

The top of her head is eroded, showing that she was carved from the centre of a tree, and that the soft inner part of the wood has rotted away.

The back of her head is rounded and her muscular shoulders are square; her neck strong. The back of her figure is not as finished as the front, which suggests that she was designed to face an audience and not to be viewed from behind.

1 Larsson 1960, p 42, referring to Thomson 1908, p 217.

Tonga
TONGA

Western Polynesia was first settled by people 2900 years ago. Before then these islands heard only the sound of waves, birds, rain falling and leaves shaking in the wind.

The people came from the west, probably from Fiji, which they had found 200 years earlier. They discovered a number of different island groups and archipelagos—Tonga, Samoa, Niue, Wallis and Futuna—then stayed for about 2000 years, developing their own culture and way of life.

Samoans eventually became the big travellers, spreading their culture over much of central Polynesia. The people of Tonga were more concerned with their own world, an archipelago of 400 kilometres from north to south. They also retained strong links with many of the Fijian islands.

Like all Polynesian people in the pre-Christian era, the Tongan people had gods, known as *'otua* [1]—the Tongan version of the eastern Polynesian concept of *atua*.

Unlike people in eastern Polynesia, those in western Polynesia in the early nineteenth century seem to have used very few wood figures to contain *atua* or other spirit beings. Six wood female figures from Tonga are known to have survived the transition to Christianity. Around 30 small figures, either female or of indeterminate sex, made from whale ivory also survived and many of these were found in Fiji. Unfortunately, only one name was recorded for these figures.[2]

It is likely that, much earlier, the western Polynesian people had carved and used ancestor figures, for many of the Samoan Outlier peoples (those people living on remote atolls and speaking a language derived from Samoan) carved wood figures. They probably went through a period of iconoclasm, and destroyed all their old art works well before the Christian missionaries got to Tonga.

In the nineteenth century, Western observers indiscriminately applied the description 'goddess' to all carved female figures in both Tonga and Fiji. It is unlikely, however, that the *'otua* (gods) of the Tongan people in the late-eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were represented in wood or ivory. As every known Tongan figure in both wood and ivory appears to have been female, these figures could have been ancestor images, used in a similar manner to those recorded from Fiji (p 26).

Only two *atua* are known in both western and eastern Polynesia—Tangaloa (Tangaroa, Kanaloa), and Maui. None of the other known *atua* from western Polynesia seem to have made the voyage further east.[3]

On Tonga, Tangaloa was an *atua* associated with the sky. In Tongan mythology there were many manifestations of Tangaloa, some of which worked in concert. They had a different *ivi*—a type of power, might, strength or ability—from ordinary people. People would pray to pairs of rocks that were understood to have *ivi*, which was different to the spirit (*laumalie*) possessed by aristocrats. There is a type of *ivi* on Tonga that is known as *fa'ahikehe,* meaning 'two sides', something that can change into something else. People prayed to these *ivi* in the pre-Christian era.[4]

1 Recorded as *hotooa* in Martin & Mariner 1817.

2 'Sakauna a great Tonga Goddess' is written on a label attached to the back of a wooden female figure. Now in the Marischal Museum, University of Aberdeen, ABDUA 63365.

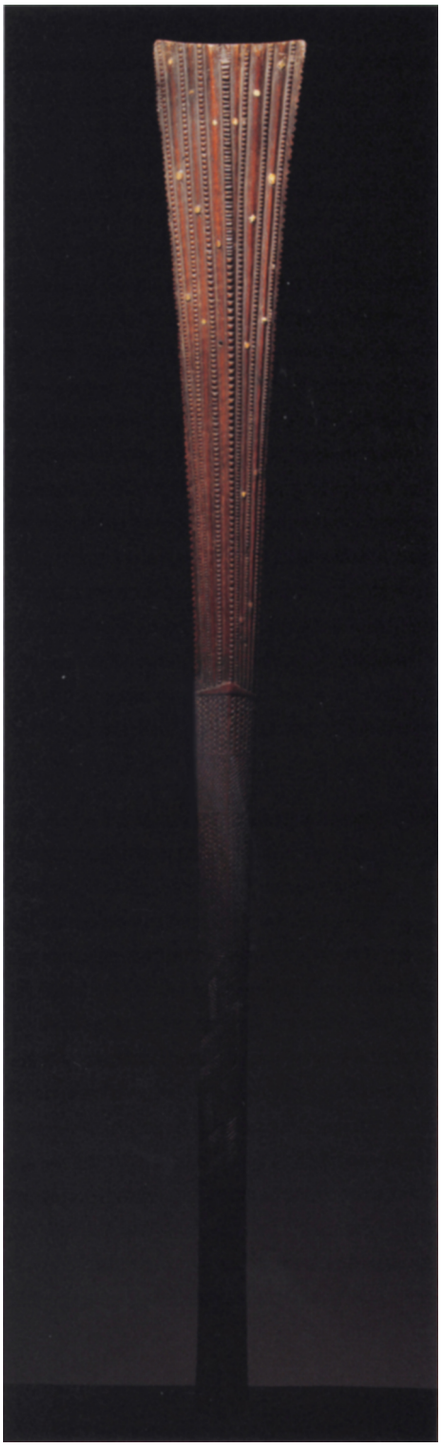
3 See Martin & Mariner 1817 for a discussion of the *atua* of Tonga in context.

4 Charmaine 'Ilaiu interviewing Kakala Taumorefolau, Milika Fe'aomoemanu Tu'imana, Taipe Tu'akalau, and Pela Mateni, in both Auckland and Tonga, 2008. Recorded by Michael Gunn.

POLE CLUB (*APA'APAI*)

Tonga, western Polynesia
probably 18th century
wood, marine ivory
93 cm

National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, 2012.1801



This rare and unusual chief's club is a superb example of Tongan weaponry. This style of club, with its narrow handle widening to a broad triangle at the top, is known as an *apa'apai* and sometimes referred to as a 'coconut-stalk' club, although the design references the midrib of the coconut leaf. Coconut midribs were commonly used in the creation of a particular type of club deployed in fighting performances, one of which was depicted in John Webber's 1779 sketch *The reception of Capt Cook in Hapaee*. During these ceremonial bouts, participants would try to bring their opponent to the ground with blows from the coconut-fibre clubs.

This club is made from hardwood and would have been capable of killing an opponent. The canoe builder who carved it decorated it with small pieces of marine ivory.[1] Carved Tongan war clubs were decorated with the surface decoration known as *tata,* which gave the object its individual identity and spiritual powers. Warriors further expressed this individual identity by naming clubs that had killed many enemies and had proven to be effective weapons. Once named, the clubs were considered to have an individual identity almost like that of a human. In some cases a club was understood to have supernatural properties and to house the *mana* of an *'otua* (*atua*, god).

1 William Mariner, in Martin & Mariner 1817, vol 2, p 94, 96.

CLUB (*'AKAU TAU*)

Tonga, western Polynesia
probably 18th century
wood
111 cm
Mark and Carolyn Blackburn, Honolulu, 169

This unique and beautifully carved club from Tonga was collected in 1777 during Captain James Cook's third voyage. The club's intaglio makes it clear that the owner was a person of consequence, most likely the Tu'i Tonga, the sacred king of Tonga, who is probably depicted on the club. Given the subtle images on the club it is possible that the artist was the Tu'i Tonga himself, or a trusted person close to him.

The saw-tooth ridging on the four edges make this club easily identifiable. The artist worked in both positive and negative relief, enabling a double reading of some images.

Visible under certain light, the ridges near the head of the club become a negative image of a doubled shark tooth. Also near the head, there are some sharp spines under the ridging, instead of the shark teeth, often with another hidden triggered spine underneath. At the far end of the club these spines are shown as the sharp end of one line of engraving, but the next sequence has the hidden spines supported by fields that may have represented militia.

Between the spines are small, finely carved panels, some incorporating geometric patterns and others depicting images, such as fish, octopus, or scenes of conflict and triumph.

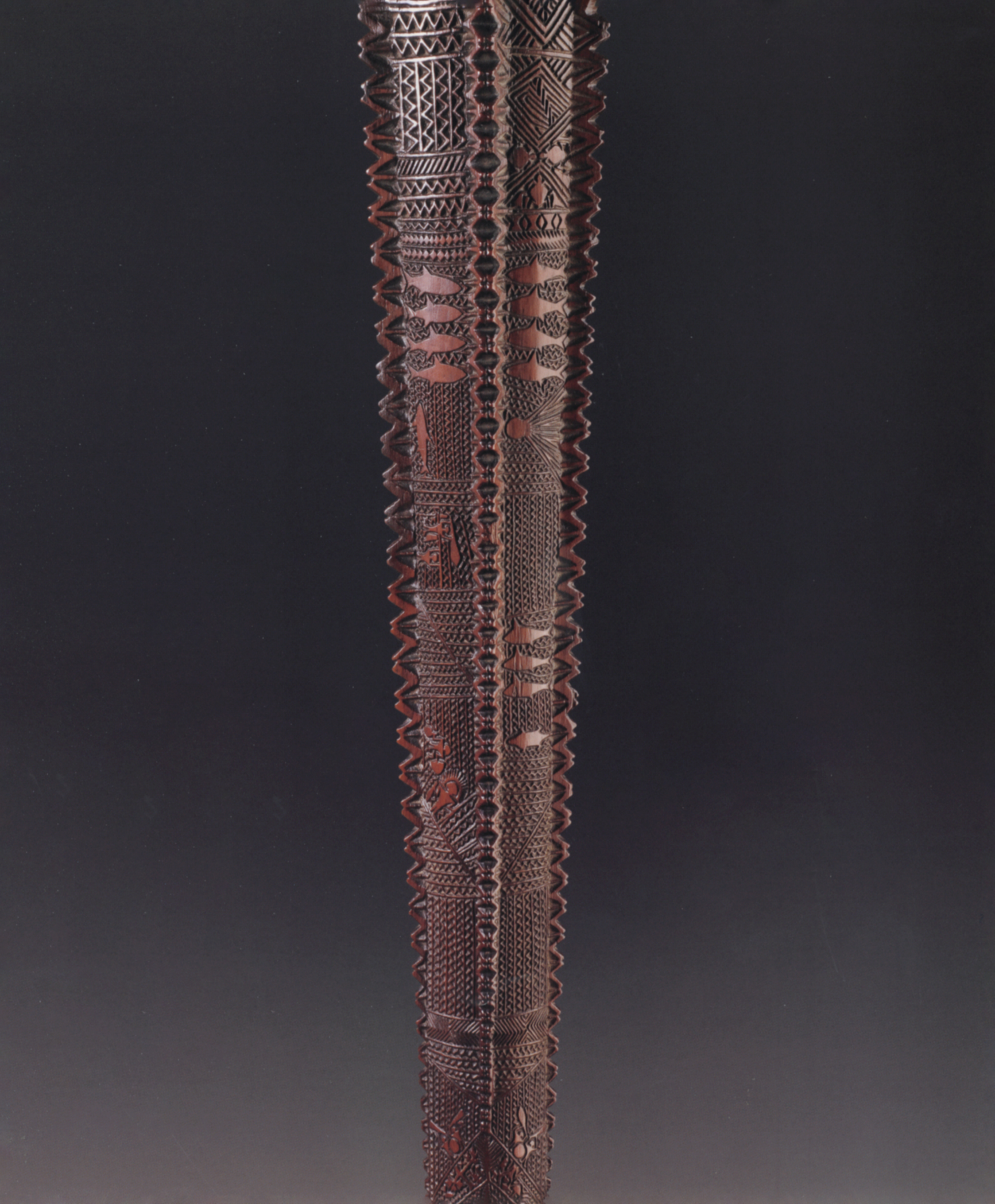
These images show the workings of the mind of a strategic warrior who plans and thinks through the techniques of fighting his enemies. His hidden troops surprise them and he executes his enemies by clubbing them to death. He regroups, then feasts with his warriors. Elsewhere, an octopus extends over several panels, possibly depicting an association with an *atua*.

Toward the handle is a scene of a man handing two bundles to another who wears a headdress that radiates around his head. The bundles are probably yams, which were a symbol of fealty to the Tu'i Tonga.[1] The recipient of the tribute has been identified as Tu'i Tonga Paulaho in his *palatavake* headdress.[2] Cook, who witnessed similar events, interacted with Tu'i Tonga Paulaho's successor, Tu'i Tonga Fatafehi Paulaho, on several occasions, and Fatafehi Paulaho was drawn by John Webber drinking kava,[3] and wearing his headdress, or bonnet as it was known to Cook.[4] However, a portrait by missionary Rev William Ellis in May 1777 of a Tongan leader, inscribed 'Feenow' in pencil[5], depicts Finau who was lord of the island of Vava'u, and in charge of Paulaho's military forces. In this portrait Finau was also wearing such a headdress and would have received similar tribute from his vassals.

Near the handle is a double scene of two men fighting with clubs over a circular object. The next scene shows a man hanging upside down from a tree, a club in his hand.

The handle carries repeated depictions of a figure shooting rats with a bow and arrow. While this may have been a favoured pastime of the owner, it is possible that the engraver was making an ironic comment: on Mangareva, the aristocracy often referred to people of the lowest class as rats.

1 Ellis 1783, p 78.
2 Kaeppler 2010, p 66.
3 Joppien & Smith 1987, vol 3, p 37.
4 ibid., vol 3, p 315.
5 ibid., vol 3, p 314.



Polynesian Outliers

POLYNESIAN OUTLIERS

The Polynesian Outliers are 18 small islands and atolls, including Nukuoro, Luangiua and Nukumanu, that are located in the western Pacific, near the region known as Island Melanesia (New Ireland, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, New Caledonia) with some in Micronesia. The inhabitants of these remote islands speak Polynesian languages, most of which appear to derive from the language used on Samoa more than 500 years ago.

Some of these islands are more than 4000 kilometres from Samoa, yet in the early nineteenth century many of the people lived within a fully developed Polynesian culture. This suggests that the islands were not all settled by starved sunburnt fishermen who had been blown away from mainstream Polynesia by a storm, but rather, that at least some were deliberately colonised, most likely by Samoan navigators.

Many Samoans were master sailors and navigators and their culture spread across the region. Their language is the ancestor of many of the Polynesian languages throughout the Pacific.

Oral histories from most parts of Polynesia contain at least one reference to a voyager from Samoa. These include Polynesian Outlier islands such as Luangiua, in what is now the Solomon Islands.[1] Samoan voyagers also travelled to Rarotonga, Tahiti, as far east as Mangareva and to Rapa Nui.[2] They went north to the Marquesas Islands and on to Hawai'i. The sea route to Aotearoa New Zealand went from central Polynesia to Samoa then south along the Kermadec Trench.

Archaeologists who have worked on remote Polynesian Outlier atolls have found that these islands have been occupied for up to 500 years, but the earliest traces of occupation do not indicate the language spoken.[3]

Because of the pervasive influence of Samoa on the islands of the region, there is no doubt that Samoans must, at some point, have shared the tradition of creating artworks to represent *atua*. All the societies that developed from Samoan colonies engaged in this practice and it is quite possible that Samoa lived in a similar cultural world. Samoa is not represented in this exhibition, however, because there are no *atua*-associated objects known to have been collected from there. In a strange irony, it seems that, a century or so before the missionary Rev John Williams arrived on Samoa in the 1830s, the people had probably engaged in an iconoclasm of their own, and there were no idols left for him to burn.[4] All that the people were able to point to as their *atua* representatives were polished stone objects. Nonetheless, because of their role and influence, it is crucial to acknowledge Samoa in understanding the *atua* of Polynesia.

1 See Hogbin 1940 for discussion of Luangiua. See also Kirch 1984.
2 See Stair 1895.
3 Davidson 1971, p 103.
4 Williams 1837.

FIGURE

possibly Luangiua (Ontong Java), Solomon Islands
20th century or earlier
wood, shell, resin
63.5 cm
National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, 2011.949

Sculpture from the Polynesian Outliers north-east of the Solomon Islands is very rare. There are only 16 known figurative sculptures from the Polynesian Outlier atolls of Ontong Java (Luangiua), Nukumanu and Takuu. Ten of these are in museum collections, three are in private hands and another three are lost. Most ancestor figures from these atolls were collected in the early twentieth century by Captain Karl Nauer,[1] and are now in the Museum für Völkerkunde in Leipzig.

While this figure has been attributed to this group of atolls, it is not known whether it was acquired on one of the atolls by Nauer. The stylistic aspects are typical of these islands, particularly Luangiua, especially the shape of the head, the sloping forehead and the body posture.

The large and heavy head, close-set eyes under horizontal brows and broad shoulders give this female figure a strong, almost masculine, sculptural presence. This is no delicate beauty; rather she is a woman of strong character and even stronger body.

The surface is weathered, as we would expect from a figure created on an atoll. The legs probably rotted and, sometime after the figure left her homeland, the stumps were sawn smooth to allow mounting for display as a work of art.

The figure was most likely created as a female ancestor figure and given offerings in the ritual house (*hale eiku*) to maintain the link with the ancestor. She was probably an *ariki*, an aristocrat of her line, the key person on a canoe that crossed the immense distance from Samoa, 3000 kilometres to the east, hundreds of years earlier. She survived this open ocean crossing of several months, so was a person of strength, someone to be revered. Her people honoured her image as they continued to lay claim to the land she had found.

1 Captain Karl Nauer was captain of the small coastal steamer *Sumatra*, based in the town of Rabaul in New Britain, and working for Norddeutcher Lloyd from 1905. He traded all around the island Melanesia region, including the small Polynesian Outlier atolls north-east of the Solomon Islands.

Cook Islands, Aitutaki

COOK ISLANDS, AITUTAKI

Aitutaki is a park-like, hilly and fertile volcanic island surrounded by an extensive lagoon. Located about 240 kilometres north of Rarotonga, the island has had a long history of settlement dating back over 1000 years.[1] The first inhabitants were most likely from Samoa. Oral histories also indicate extensive contacts with Tahiti and the Marquesas Islands to the east, and with other islands in the Cook Islands archipelago.

Traditional narratives from Aitutaki indicate that Ru was the leader of the first people who came to Aitutaki in his double canoe *Nga-Puariki,* seeking new lands.[2] More than 200 people came with him. On landing they built a sacred enclosure and named it Puariki after their canoe. A second enclosure was built inland, named Vai-Kuriri after Kuriri, Ru's *atua*, which they brought with them. Ru called the land Araura, which means 'where the wind drove Ru in his search for land'.

It is not clear where Ru and his people came from. According to the narrative they originated in Avaiki (or Havaiki or Hawaiki in other Polynesian languages), which means more than 'the place we came from' and has connotations of 'the other world'.

Some time later another canoe arrived at the island under the command of Te-Erui, who came from Avaiki to the west. Te-Erui began to kill Ru's people and he succeeded in killing all the men, but kept the women and eventually returned some of the land to them. Descendants of these women have owned title to the land ever since.

The sculptural art traditions of Aitutaki were directly associated with the people's religious beliefs and linked to their *marae*. Key ancestral figures were the main focus at each enclosure. Some enclosures celebrated two ancestors who originated from different homelands. These ancestors were chiefs (*ariki*) from other islands within central and western Polynesia, places such as Rarotonga, Rimatara, Tahiti, Tonga, and Avaiki.

Papeia and Vahapata, Tahitian missionaries with the London Missionary Society, arrived on Aitutaki in 1821 and, after only 15 months, several chiefs converted to Christianity. During the conversion the chiefs set fire to the temples, and 31 gods and bundles of gods (called idols), were given to the missionaries and removed from Aitutaki. As the ship neared the missionary headquarters at Raiatea in the Society Islands, these idols were hung from the yardarms and exhibited as trophies. Before they were taken from Aitutaki the Rev John Williams numbered 25 of the idols and recorded

their names and histories. Six of these were sent to England, but much of this documentation was subsequently lost.

> ACCOUNT OF THE IDOLS[3]
> No. 2. An idol named *Te-rongo*, one of the great deities, called a *kai-tangata*, or man-eater. The priests of this idol were supposed to be inspired by the shark.
>
> No. 8. Tangaroa; the great national god of Aitutaki, and of almost all the adjacent islands. He holds the net with which he catches the spirits of men as they fly from their bodies, and a spear with which he kills them.
>
> No. 15. A rod, with snares at the end, made of the fibres of the cocoa-nut husk, with which the priest caught the spirit of the god. It was used in cases of pregnancy, when the female was ambitious that her child should be a son, and become a famous warrior. It was also employed in war-time to catch the god by his leg, to secure his influence on the side of the party performing the ceremony …
>
> No. 18. Ruanuu; a chief from Raiatea, who, ages ago, sailed in a canoe from that island, and settled in Aitutaki. From him a genealogy is traced. He died at Aitutaki, and was deified, as *Te atua taitai tere*, or the conductor of fleets. The Raiateans have several interesting traditions connected with Ruanuu. To this idol was appended an old tattered silk handkerchief, and the foot of a wine-glass; both of which were obtained from Captain Cook's vessel, and dedicated to Ruanuu, 'the god or guide of fleets,' for conducting that celebrated navigator to their shores.
>
> No. 25. Taau, with his fan, &c.; the god of thunder. When the thunder peals, the natives said that this god was flying, and produced this sound by the flapping of his wings.

1 Allen & Schubel 1990, p 265.
2 Pakoti 1895, p 65.
3 Williams 1837, pp 109–10.

FEMALE FIGURE

Aitutaki, Cook Islands, central Polynesia
acquired 1825
wood, paint
60 cm

Staatliches Museum für Völkerkunde, München, 190

This is one of the most captivating figures to have survived the 1821–1823 iconoclasm on Aitutaki that was instigated by Papeiha,[1] the Rev John Williams and other members of the London Missionary Society (LMS):

> The gods and bundles of gods, which had escaped destruction, thirty-one in number, were carried in triumph to the boat; and we came off to the vessel with the trophies of our bloodless conquest, 'rejoicing as one that findeth great spoil'.[2]

She was most likely the image of an ancestor, for the painted markings may represent body tattoos. The sides of her body are carved in relief with a zigzag line and her body emphasises geometric relationships, with its squared shoulders and raised rectangular breasts. The arms emerge from the sides to rest their three-fingered hands just below the breasts and well above the navel, unlike almost all other central Polynesian figures on which the hands are placed on either side of the navel. In profile, the figure is pear shaped, with the bulk of the torso expressed lower down, perhaps indicating that the woman depicted was in middle age.

The figure, which is made from wood and paint, is in good condition, with no evidence of erosion or abuse. Straight-edged blade marks are evident on the surface of the wood, particularly the feet and shoulders, which suggests an iron or steel tool was used to finish the figure.

The figure entered the Staatliches Museum für Völkerkunde in Munich in 1825 as part of the 'legacy of Joseph Banks' (1743–1820) and had been assumed to have been collected during one of Captain James Cook's voyages, despite the fact that Cook only passed south of Aitutaki. Recent research by Michaela Appel[3] has found that the figure arrived in London in April 1824 and was purchased and brought to Munich in 1825. The 1824 date makes it more likely that the LMS took the figure from Aitutaki in 1823.

Te Rangi Hiroa was the first to propose that the figure originated on Aitutaki. He based this assumption on the zigzag lines on the sides of the body, noting 'The serrated line with sunken triangles opposite alternate teeth is characteristic of the Aitutaki carved slabs'.[4] Hjalmar Stolpe attributed the figure to the Hervey Islands (which include Aitutaki as well as Rarotonga) but was inclined to '… refer it especially to Rarotonga and to regard it as an image of Tangaroa',[5] noting also that the figure was labelled in 1881 as 'Gotze aus Neu Seeland'. It was later attributed by somebody else to the Marquesas Islands.[6]

Although Williams stated that the LMS carried away 31 'gods and bundles of gods' from Aitutaki, very few can now be found in museums or private collections. Those that have been attributed to Aitutaki have no fully documented links.

1 Papeiha was a Tahitian Christian who became a teacher and a missionary of the Church of Christ at Raiatea (Society Islands), and was heavily involved in the conversion of the people of Aitutaki (starting 1821) and Rarotonga (starting 1823) to Christianity.
2 Williams 1837, pp 62–63.
3 Curator for the Pacific collection, Staatliches Museum für Völkerkunde, München.
4 Hiroa 1944, p 349, 341, fig 211.
5 Stolpe 1927, p 41, fig 46.
6 Hiroa 1944, p 339.

Cook Islands, Nga-Pu-Toru Islands (Atiu, Mitiaro, Mauke)

COOK ISLANDS, NGA-PU-TORU ISLANDS (ATIU, MITIARO, MAUKE)

The Nga-Pu-Toru island group of Atiu, Mauke and Mitiaro is located in the southern part of the Cook Islands, north-east of Rarotonga. The islands are about 40 kilometres apart. In the early nineteenth century the strongest lived on Atiu and dominated Mauke and Mitiaro in an internecine war.

Little is known about the pre-Christian religious and ritual traditions of the people in this island group because the religious objects collected there were not well documented at the time of their acquisition. The main type of ritual or religious object, the name of which has been lost, is reputed to have originated on Mitiaro, but similar objects have been linked with Mauke.[1] The objects are generally known by Westerners as Mitiaro mace gods, or Mitiaro staff gods, even though they are neither club-like weapons nor staves.

Rev John Williams of the London Missionary Society converted the people of Aitutaki to Christianity in 1821. A converted chief from Aitutaki travelled with him on his schooner, the *Endeavour*, on a tour around the Hervey Islands. As they approached Atiu:

> We had not been long near the island, when we perceived a large double canoe approaching us, in the centre of which, on an elevated stage, was seated the principal chief. His person was tall and slender, and his aspect commanding. He was clothed in a white shirt, having a piece of Indian print girt around his loins; his long and beautiful black hair hung gracefully over his shoulders, or waved in the passing breeze, as, with the motion of his body, he kept time to the rowers.[2]

This elegant young chief, Romatane, was welcomed aboard the *Endeavour*, then taken aside by the Aitutaki chief. They spent the night in conversation, and early next morning Romatane announced that he and his fellows were going to abandon their old ways and become Christians.

The *Endeavour* proceeded to Mitiaro and Mauke, where Romatane was also chief. Williams recorded[3] the response of the people when Romatane leapt ashore and told them of their conversion and the iconoclasm that would accompany it, including the destruction of Tarianui, their god.[4]

> The people listened with astonishment, and inquired if the gods would not all be enraged, and strangle them. 'No,' replied the king, 'it is out of the power of the wood, that we have adorned and called a god, to kill us'. 'But,' said one, 'must we burn *Tarianui*?' or Great Ears. 'Yes,' replied the king, 'commit him and all the evil spirits to the flames. Let us destroy our maraes, and burn all the evil spirits with fire; never let us worship them again. They are wood, which we have carved and decorated, and called gods.'

The people of Mitiaro, and later Mauke, were astounded:

> In, as it were, one day, they were induced to consent to the destruction of objects which former generations had venerated, and which they themselves looked upon as most sacred.

We do not know whether the 20 or so surviving 'staff gods' were associated with Tarianui. There is a definite semantic link between Tarianui of the Nga-Pu-Toru islands and Tiki puaikanui,[5] the *atua* of the primary sacred enclosure (*ahu*) on the island of Ua Pou in the Marquesas Islands.

1 A wood figure, similar in appearance to this one, is Cambridge MAA Z 10569, the original register notation has 'A god—MAUKE' as the object description; three other fragments with long sennit tails attached also have the word 'Mauke' associated with them (Cambridge MAA Z 6045 A; Z 6045 B; Z 6046).

2 Williams 1837, vol 1, p 83.

3 Williams 1837, vol 1, p 87, 88, 89.

4 Also known as Taringa-nui = Great Ears, or Big Ears. The name of a god of which the king was the priest.

5 Tautain 1898, p 27; *puaika* = ear, *nui* = big in the language used on Ua Pou (Uapou) in the Marquesas Islands.

SKELETON FOR A GOD

Nga-Pu-Toru island group (Mitiaro, Mauke, Atiu), Cook Islands, central Polynesia
late-18th to early 19th century
wood
39.3 cm
British Museum, London, Oc1982,Q.121

This figure formed part of a religious object that was covered with feathers and had a long flowing tail. It might have been an abstract image of a bird, or a comet.[1]

This is one of the most complete of the 26 fragments (20 bodies and six tails) of these objects that are now held in museums or private collections.

Originally they all had a double-chambered head with four or more 'ears' that are shaped like a flat, polished lance head. The outer surface of the 'ears' sometimes shows use-wear, including worm tracks along the surface, which is different from that found elsewhere on these figures. The most likely explanation for this type of use-wear is that a substance similar to fat or blood was applied to the polished surface, and removed some time later.

The head tapers through a neck to a skeletal body that is represented by rows of delicate arches grouped into five or more symmetrical sets. At each end of the arch the wood has been carved into a small, polished fish-shape. On one figure, however, the image is distinctly human in shape. The body of the object was probably covered with feathers that were held under the arches and attached with sennit or fine string. The figure finishes with a shaft, shaped like a spatula with a broad flat end, to which was attached a long and heavy tail made from twined fibre, probably sennit. There are dozens of human-made knots in several of the tails. The joint between the wood shaft and the fibre tail was covered with plain white bark cloth.

About half the surviving figures are broken at the delicate wood section near the junction with the tail. It is possible that this was caused by a design fault rather than by the people breaking their religious objects when they converted to Christianity. All the unbroken figures, such as this one, bear subtle marks indicating that a tail was once attached.

1 A related figure collected from the island of Atiu is distinctively comet- or meteor-like and was registered in two parts in the British Museum: Oc,LMS.49 (wood head and body) and Oc,LMS.50 (the tail made from braided sennit and covered with fine red feathers).

Cook Islands, Rarotonga

COOK ISLANDS, RAROTONGA

Rarotonga, which is situated west of Tahiti and east of Samoa, is the biggest island in the Cook Islands. It is similar to Tahiti in structure, with a central volcanic core surrounded by a narrow and fertile coastal strip.

The original inhabitants knew the island intimately, from the plains to high up in the valleys and the steep crags; and *atua* were everywhere, in the rocks, the wind, the sea. Every movement had a spiritual dimension.

People first arrived on Rarotonga about 1000 years ago; while there is no proof of who they were, it is likely that they came from Samoa in the west. Word spread of the new island and it began to fill up with migrants, drifters in the wind. These were wild times, when anarchy prevailed and anyone could and did kill anyone else. Eventually strong men arrived who could control the population. They brought a strange power with them. The greatest control came with Tangiia from Tahiti, who became known as Tangiia-Nui, Tangiia the Great. He imposed order on the people and had them build a road around the island, to unite the population and give them a common purpose. They established sacred enclosures on their land, close to the road. Tangiia taught them how to focus on their ancestors, how to sacrifice, and how to build meaning into their lives.

Oral traditions say that the first to land on Rarotonga was Tu-te-rangi-marama, also named Tumu-te-varovaro—the heart or source of life. He was probably a man, but became a god, an *atua*. Some time later Tangaroa arrived from Iva, in the east, accompanied by his warrior Au-make. Some say that Tangaroa was a god, an *atua*, others that he was a man, a navigator. Iva was in the east, either in the Marquesas Islands or the sacred enclosure Taputapuatea, on the island of Raiatea, in the Society Islands.

Ngare, an aristocrat from Iva, followed Tangaroa and, after him, came an aristocrat who was also from Iva. Then more people arrived, women and men.

The biggest and strongest on Rarotonga were not *atua*, but men. Karika from Samoa, Tangiia and his brother Tu-tapu are three men who are in most of the stories told. Tangiia and Tu-tapu were enemies and they chased each other over thousands of kilometres of Pacific Ocean. Their final conflict was on Rarotonga where Karika killed Tu-tapu and Tangiia pounced on his brother, gouged out his eyes, and swallowed them.

This event was the basis of the three main tribes (*vaka*) on Rarotonga.

Today we look at museum collections and everything seems a bit tame by comparison. The missionaries came to Rarotonga in 1823 and convinced the people to give up sacrifice, stop fighting, burn their sacred enclosures and hand over their sacred art works, their idols. Rev John Williams had a strength that the people admired, and women admired his wife's London fashions. He worked on the chief of the weakest tribe and, before long, the women were wearing elegant black dresses, and their enemies' women were wondering why they were missing out.

Today the people of Rarotonga are a global people and can be found in all the fashionable places throughout the world. Their *atua* are forgotten by all but a few. Back home, on the island, the three *vaka* are still strong, and the council of chiefs has a voice that can be heard above the clamour of democracy. The sacred enclosures are almost all in ruins. Rarotonga's Taputapuatea, once the largest and most sacred *marae* on the island, is still the jewel, but ownership of the *marae* is continually contested in the courts. An inland group of *marae* have been restored and tourists come to see what life was like when sacrifice accompanied every sacred interaction. They eat their dinner while a projector overhead shows a reconstruction of a man being sacrificed by having his head crushed with a stone. The old gods are gone, replaced by Christianity in whitewashed churches. The old gods became the foundations of the church.

MALE FERTILITY FIGURE

Rarotonga, Cook Islands, central Polynesia
late-18th – early 19th century
wood, feathers, coir (sennit), bark
69 cm

British Museum, London, Oc,LMS.169

Leaning a little to his right, this figure stands serene. Three smaller figures stand free on his chest, just below the slightly feminine breasts. Two more figures appear to be emerging from each of his arms. His penis, at rest, is one of the few that survived the iconoclasm. Based on appearance, this figure was created for use in fertility or renewal ritual.

Only one other related figure from Rarotonga is known.[1] It was collected by Elijah Armitage, a member of the London Missionary Society, who lived on Rarotonga from November 1833 to January 1835, teaching the European art of weaving to the local people. Both figures survived intact, but neither came with any information. Armitage worked on Rarotonga after the main iconoclasm that began in 1823 and finished in 1827.

These two figures raise more questions than give answers. Why did they survive intact? They were neither thrown into the flames, nor emasculated. Was it because the missionaries were convinced the figures were not idols? If so, what distinguished an idol to be burnt or mutilated from one that could be left intact? Did the chiefs and local people decide?

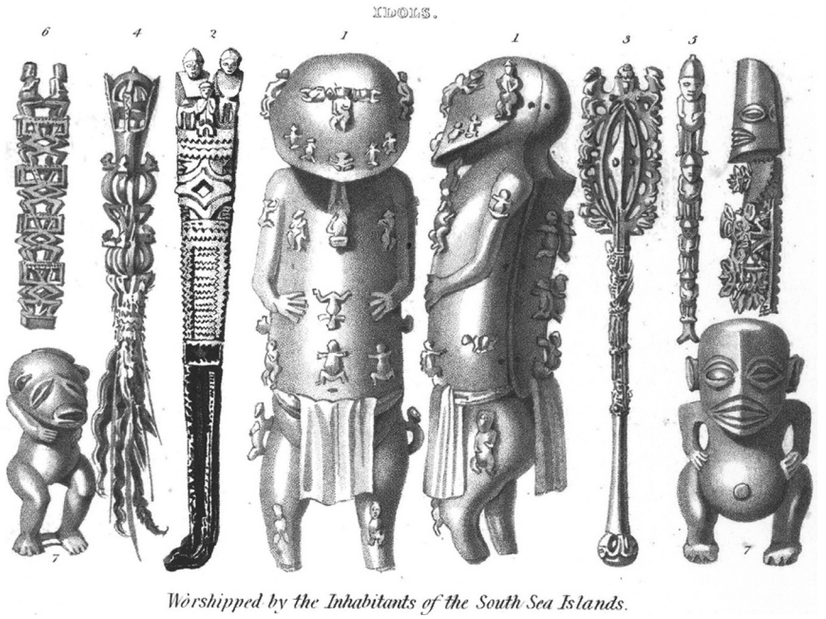
It is possible that the Rarotongan people saw the 'fertility figures' as harmless and unrelated to whatever the Christian missionaries understood to be a threat. Or perhaps these two figures were kept back by a strong leader who was able to resist missionary pressure. After his death, his successors may have given at least one of them to Armitage.

Were these two figures associated with *atua*, as others have speculated?[2] The two figures on the breast of the Armitage figure, and the figures on the arms of the British Museum piece, have large, prominent ears, which possibly refer to Taringa-nui,[3] the *atua* recorded from Mitiaro. But as nothing is known, we can only make educated guesses.

1 This related figure was owned by the late George Ortiz, a private collector previously living near Geneva in Switzerland.

2 A pencil note on the British Museum's registration slip for this figure reads 'Te Rongo & his three sons from Rarotonga', but as Hiroa pointed out (1944, p 316) 'The Mangaian god Rongo was the father of the three ancestors of the Ngariki tribe but there is no record that the Rarotongan god Te Rongo had three sons'.

3 *Taringa* (*Taria*) = ear; *-nui* = big, grand, great.



Idols. Worshipped by the inhabitants of the South Sea Islands in William Ellis, *Polynesian researches*, vol 2, Fisher, Son, & Jackson, London, 1829 (frontispiece).

FISHERMAN'S GOD, OR *'ORAMATUA*

Rarotonga, Cook Islands, central Polynesia
18th or early 19th century
wood
42 cm
Staatliches Museum für Völkerkunde, München, 191

This distinctive male figure, one of eight known, is generally referred to as a 'fisherman's god', after a description by the Rev John Williams of the London Missionary Society (LMS):

> An idol, of which the figure on the opposite side is a correct representation, was placed on the fore part of every fishing canoe; and when the natives were going on a fishing excursion, prior to setting off, they invariably presented offerings to the god, and invoked him to grant them success.[1]

People on Rarotonga today understand this type of figure to be an image of the ancient *atua* Tangaroa.[2] Many regard Tangaroa as their symbol—an essential part of their identity—and the Cook Islands $1 coin features a 'fisherman's god' image that is most likely based on München 191. Variations, called Tangaroa, are located for luck just inside every Rarotongan shop. The contemporary stylistic emphasis is more on the exposed penis and distinctive 'Rarotongan' eye shape, and less on the large belly.

Rev William Wyatt Gill of the LMS collected one of the few 'fisherman's gods' from the Cook Islands with a documented name ('symbol of the fishing god Mokoiro') from the island of Mangaia:

> In heathenism no canoe ever ventured over the reef at Mangaia to fish without first fastening to its bows the fisherman's god. This consisted merely of the extremity of a coconut frond secured with fine-plaited sennit tied into a bow. This Mokoiro, as it was called, was supposed to be all-powerful in regard to the winds and waves.[3]

William Ellis refers to one of these figures[4] as an 'oramatua or demon'[5] and, in the Rarotongan dictionary:

> ora n. life, state of living, animate existence, the period between birth and death, the present state of existence
>
> matua (also metua) n. — 1. parent, elder. 2. an expert, one who is skilled in any art or science; a master, as the navigator of a ship, etc.
>
> metua adj. old, ancient, old in years, perfected, matured.[6]

Today, the word '*orometua* is used on Rarotonga to refer to a 'pastor, or priest'.

1 Williams 1837, pp 117–18. The sketch Williams referred to was based on the figure above, lower RHS which was published by Ellis 1829, vol 2, frontis. The figure in that sketch is now in the British Museum Oc,LMS.36

2 It seems clear that, since the people of Rarotonga converted to Christianity in the early nineteenth century, their understanding of the religious beliefs of their ancestors has narrowed and focused on a few key figures, especially Tangaroa, and the subtleties of the eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century world have been lost.

3 Gill 1894, pp 149–50.

4 Probably British Museum Oc,LMS.36.

5 Ellis 1829, vol 2, p 221.

6 Savage 1962.

A variation on the centipede design element, painted on bark cloth from Rarotonga. 318 x 221 cm, British Museum Oc1910,-.257

FISHERMAN'S GOD, OR *'ORAMATUA*

Rarotonga, Cook Islands, central Polynesia
late-18th – early 19th century
wood, black paint
33 cm
British Museum, London, Oc.9866

One of the most noticeable things about this canoe figure is his slightly pigeon-toed feet, with the toes closer together than the heels. He must be chocked to prevent him falling backwards and his companion piece in this exhibition (p 54) would fall forward if not similarly supported. We wonder how these figures were attached to the canoes.

The existing eight examples of Rarotongan 'fishermen's gods' are clearly related to each other, being of a similar size, but appear to have been made by different hands and at different times. Although we don't know much about their original context, it is possible that every fisherman's canoe sported a wood figure at the prow. At least four of the surviving figures demonstrate the effects of weathering and probably date from the early nineteenth century.

Although these figures are unique to Rarotonga, several similarities in style link them to the Society Islands and Tahiti, and to a lesser extent the Marquesas Islands.

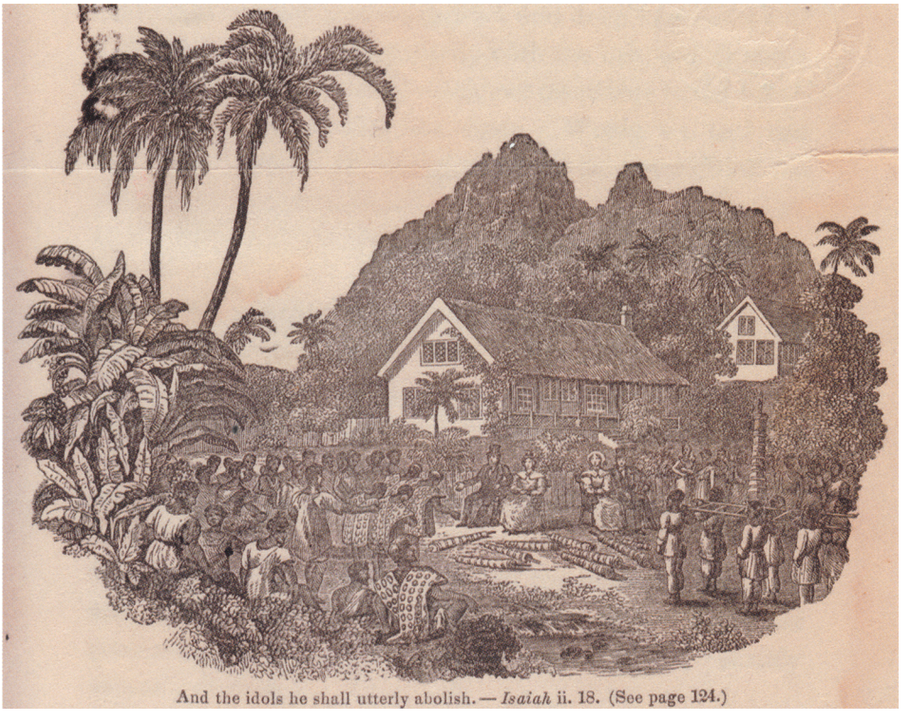
Wood figures from all three regions share a number of features, including the straight shoulder line and the curve that delineates the edge of the chest as it rises to the shoulder. The Rarotongan and Tahitian figures depict the breast nipples and other features of an old man. The oldest of them all is the Rarotongan type with its huge collapsed belly.

This is one of only two examples with designs painted on the body.[1] The two designs share a saw-tooth design around the navel and on the upper side of the feet.

This figure is notable for the design of a centipede with a three-point tail depicted on both arms and legs. On Rarotonga, the *taura* (ancestral spirit) lives in two creatures, the centipede and the shark.[2] The centipede, even today, has a remarkable presence on Rarotonga, and is not treated lightly by those who understand its significance. It is, therefore, unlikely that the design represents a tattoo; it is more likely that *atua* and *taura* had their own designs that were painted on the figure when used in ritual context.

1 The other painted figure is registered as 70/53517 in the Peabody Museum, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts, and left Rarotonga before 1843.

2 Mahiriki Tangaroa and Michael Tavioni, pers com, 2011.



John Williams *A narrative of missionary enterprises in the South Sea islands: with remarks upon the natural history of the islands, origin, languages, traditions, and usages of the inhabitants* (preface) Illustrated with engravings on wood by G Baxter 1837
National Library of Australia, Canberra Rex Nan Kivell Collection

HEAD OF A RAROTONGAN *ATUA*

Rarotonga, Cook Islands, central Polynesia
probably 18th century or earlier
wood
79.5 cm

On loan to the Menil Collection, Houston, from Adelaide de Menil, A 7647

On Rarotonga, the people took to iconoclasm with a vengeance and the classic image of Rarotongan *atua* figures being laid at the feet of the missionaries was not a fantasy. As well as exposing the figure in public before giving it to the missionaries, the people destroyed and burnt the buildings associated with their *marae* (of which there were at least 40), then uprooted the stone pavement that formed the foundation of each *marae* precinct.

This figure, the head part of a Rarotongan *atua*, has a distinct presence on its right side that radiates a sense of peace. But this is in stark contrast to its left side, which seems numb and shows signs of violent damage, its left eye having been stabbed with a metal knife at least 24 times.

Today we wonder at the power that held the people to these figures so strongly, until they broke away then attacked the figures with a fury.

This figure is said to have been collected on Rarotonga by Rev John Williams of the London Missionary Society, who arrived there in 1823.

Rarotongan atua ('staff gods')

RAROTONGAN *ATUA* ('STAFF GODS')

These sculptural figures, known to the West as 'staff gods', have been objects of fascination and a mystery to outsiders for several centuries. They are containers of an *atua*—a deified ancestor of 20 or even 40 generations ago—and symbol of a leader.

Eruera Nia, artist and holder of the *rangatira* title and living at Marae Taputapuatea in Rarotonga, has added greatly to our knowledge of these figures,[1] noting that a staff god accompanies the ritual priest as he ceremonially invests a new *ariki*, or leader, and the *mana* of the staff god passes to the person about to be invested.

According to Nia, the staff god is wholly male and it represents the family and tribal *atua* of the priest (*ta'unga*), who has the right to hold it. The arms extending left and right, and the chest with the smaller figures, represent direct ancestors (*papa'anga*) of the person holding the staff. In ritual context the priest wraps a long length of tapa around the centre of the figure, forming the belly or stomach, which is where the *mana* of the figure resides, contained in shells and feathers that were never seen by anyone else. The priest holding the staff confers on the tribe's new leader the title of *ariki* (the paramount leader of a tribe) or *mataiapo* (the chief of a sub tribe), thus continuing the genealogy of that title.[2] Nia says that only men can hold the offices of *ariki* or *mataiapo*, and they hold a male staff while they are being invested as such. Females are represented only in the figures that describe genealogy.

Each staff was given the names of the person who founded the title, as well as the accompanying genealogy, but these names remained private and were not discussed in public.[3] The *atua* associated with the staff god was that of a deified ancestor, the first person to hold each particular title. Only the person who carved the *atua*[4] would know the *atua* he had created and the family that received it. This is accepted as normal. Some names will only ever be known by their owners, and sometimes they are forgotten.

There are at least 40 surviving staff gods,[5] and until Nia provided information about the context in which they were created, and their owners, these aspects of their creation were not understood by outsiders.

Nia's information makes it clear that staff gods were fully integrated into the formal process of succession of the major titles that bound Rarotongan society. The missionaries, obsessed with rooting out 'idolatry', misunderstood the nature of the staffs and destroyed most of them during London Missionary Society (LMS) meetings.

The most credible theory of the origin of staff gods is that they were originally created at the time that Tangiia-Nui (Tangi'ia, Tangi'ia-nui) established order on Rarotonga, around 1250, and built the ring road (*ara metua* or priest's road) that circled the island, as well as a series of *marae* closely connected with this road.

Tangiia-Nui came to Rarotonga from Tahiti at the time of many of the great navigators. In addition to controlling all of Rarotonga, he was one of the most travelled people of his time. Clearly a master mariner, he was known in Fiji to the west and as far as Rapa Nui (Easter Island) to the east. He brought the Tahitian religious system to Rarotonga and, until the LMS arrived in 1823, this politico–religious system provided a structure that enabled Rarotongan society to operate successfully for six centuries.

Staff god (detail) Menil Collection, Houston A 7647

Staff god Cook Islands before 1870, wood, 86 cm long, Donated to Ethnographical Collection in 1870 by EC Hammer
© The National Museum of Denmark, Ethnographic Collections *Ic.371*

Nia's information confirms that the staff gods were part of the network of control Tangiia-Nui established around the entire island. There was one for each *marae*, which gave the title succession associated with the *marae* a visible and tangible presence. It is likely that Tangiia-Nui appointed the first person to hold each title and created a system within which a deified ancestor could manifest himself as an *atua* in an art object.

Clearly there was an original artwork which was copied or replicated by a number of artists, so at least one staff god could be allocated to the responsible priest at each of the *marae* that participated in the initial arrangement.

The staff itself is understood to be a distended phallus, and as such may well be distantly associated with related sculptural objects found further along the archipelago, in Rurutu (pp 76–77).

At the top of the figure is the head, with smaller figures in line further along the sculpture. Generally the first small figure is a girl (facing outward on both sides), then a boy (facing along the line of figures, away from the head), followed by alternating girls and boys. On the known surviving *atua* figures there are between three and nine children at the head end.

The detail on the left shows two female figures—one on top of the other—facing the viewer. Another set of figures at their backs face the reverse. To the right, on the top row, is a male figure. Underneath him, facing the viewer, is a figure with a narrow body and legs in a dancing position. To his back another dancing figure also faces the reverse. The large ears on all four figures in this detail are possibly a reference to an *atua* (most likely a deified ancestor) known as Taringa-Nui (Big Ear).[6]

The composition of the figures at the head end of the Rarotongan *atua* is quite different to that at the phallus end. At the head end, the smaller male figures face away from the head, happily displaying their penises. The smaller female figures look out, quite provocatively. This end of the *atua* figure is clearly associated with fertility. The lower part of each figure, male and female, contains another figure, possibly an indication of the next generation to come, or the life force that animates each person.

At the phallus end, the smaller figures are much more circumspect. They appear to be forming protective or even defensive positions. The male figures, flanking a female figure (perhaps their sister), face outwards along the shaft, penises hidden. The dominant male, whose large and well-loved penis is patinated from handling in the illustrated figure, is connected by four thin rods on his back to a lone male (possibly a priest) who faces back along the shaft, again with his penis hidden. Between this possible priest and the next group and between each group is a roughened section that was most likely covered with bark-cloth or another ritually significant fibre such as sennit. The dominant male is barely connected to the other figures, whereas further along the piece the shaft is quite substantial.

1 Eruera Nia, pers comm, 8–14 November 2013.

2 Nia also noted that the priest holding the staff has the ability to create other gods (deified ancestors).

3 Michael Tavioni, a sculptor active on Rarotonga today, says that it is acceptable to say '*he Atua*' for the staff god.

4 Ta'unga Tarai Atua.

5 These 40 fall into two distinct groups: 24 were finely worked and probably made without metal tools (two intact, 18 head ends, four phallus ends); and 16, all intact, were apparently made later, possibly to replace those destroyed or given to the missionaries.

6 The presence of another *atua* known as Tiki Puaika-Nui (Tiki Big Ear) on the biggest sacred enclosure on the island of Ua Pou in the Marquesas Islands (Tautain 1898, p 28) reinforces this interpretation.

HEAD OF A RAROTONGAN *ATUA*

Rarotonga, Cook Islands, central Polynesia
probably 18th century or earlier
wood
72.5 cm

Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, Cambridge University, E 1895.158 (Z 6099)

This figure is the head of a Rarotongan *atua* with seven smaller figures held in a line between its arms.

While the main head is so narrow that it has the appearance of a sharp axe head, the impression is of serenity.

The mouth is created from three ridges, or concertina folds, with the inner ridge, or tongue, appearing to rise from the other two. The elliptical and perfectly balanced eye gives the impression of sight, just as the slightly asymmetrical mouth, which creates the impression of movement—could almost be speaking.

The line of smaller, alternating male and female figures could be children. The female figures face to the side, two of them back to back. They have broad faces and bodies that contrast with the spare elegance of the main head. Their ears are long and slanted. Between each pair of girls is a boy facing away from the head, looking down the line, his penis at chest level, his legs facing outwards. There are relief carvings of upside-down human figures on the girls' bellies and the boys' shoulders. The oval shapes next to these carvings are also in relief and reminiscent of an open vulva. The impression is of calm, strength, comfort and fertility.

The back of the figure is notched, like a backbone, which may be a reference to the all important genealogy. At the end of the small figures are the remains of two broken and chopped links that connected this group to the now missing parts of the entire figure.

VAKA

Rarotonga, Cook Islands, central Polynesia
late-18th – early 19th century
wood
82 cm
British Museum, London, Oc1910,0609.1

This unique figure portrays a *vaka* in both senses of the word: an ocean-going canoe, and the people of one of the three districts (*vaka*) of Rarotonga.[1]

The man at the end, riding his ancestral penis, is the captain of the *vaka* canoe, and the chief of the *vaka* people. Immediately behind him are three figures, one facing back into the *vaka* and the next two back-to-back. There were 15 figures in the main body of the *vaka,* six on each side (one missing), and three in a line in the centre. At the end are two figures on a different plane from the others.

It is most likely that the work was created later than the main group of well-known *atua* (staff god) figures from Rarotonga, with the artist selecting elements of the pattern set by earlier sacred objects. The style of the heads of the figures at the end of the shaft is related to the main group of *atua* figures and is recognisably Rarotongan, but the smaller figures in the main body of the *vaka* are schematic. The 'crew' figures at the back have large ears, which is possibly a link to the *atua* Taringa-Nui.

The central section of the shaft was most likely to have been wrapped in bark cloth enclosing feathers.[2]

Why was this work created? It has been described as revealing the genealogy and the union, or alliance, between two tribes within the three districts of Rarotonga.[3] In this sense, it would have represented an alliance between two of these districts, which would usually happen through marriage.

1 The three *vaka* districts known today are Vaka Takitumu, Vaka Puaikura and Vaka Te o Tonga.
2 Hiroa 1944, p 326.
3 Mahiriki Tangaroa, pers comm, 2011.

Pou tupuna

POU TUPUNA

left

AKAMATA

Eruera Nia

Rarotonga, Cook Islands, central Polynesia

2004

wood

142 cm

National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, 2010.1182

right

TAPUTU

Eruera Nia

Rarotonga, Cook Islands, central Polynesia

2002

wood

150 cm

National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, 2010.1183

Pou tupuna are ancestors sculpted in wood or stone. Their ancestry describes history and knowledge. The owners of these sculptures are their descendants and the living. Some *pou tupuna* depict personal gods. The recipient of the sculpture and the Ta'unga[1] who creates it are the first ones to know the design, the provenance and generation given by the family. These sculptures have been used to delineate tribal boundaries, sacred sites and ancestral buildings.

It is little wonder that much of this exhibition is without provenance, as many of the objects are disconnected and removed from their real home and family. I was introduced to this art form as a child and have made and known these objects ever since. Only the departed reside in *pou tupuna*. If a *tupuna* is taken from home or family without their knowledge or agreement, it is called 'breaking *tapu*' and is a wrong done to the owners.

My grandfather's eldest sister encouraged this knowledge in me. It has lasted till manhood. Before her death, my mother asked that I maintain the integrity of our *marae* and look after its graves and its sacred places. I do this.

A friend and artist, Taputu, died an untimely death. I carved his *Pou* out of respect for him, his ancestry and that he might live on in another form and be so remembered. I also did this to encourage others to learn this skill. The head form depicts his family status, and the family gave his genealogy. That is all. His travels and display show others how important this art form is to us.

Akamata was created at the time a Tongan female god was created beside him. He came from my family and encourages the Rangatira to return their *tupuna* to our *marae*. The timber is Toa, Taiki.[2] His name, Akamata, means 'the beginning'.

These two sculptures resided in Taputapuatea Marae in Rarotonga in line with two sacred sites beyond the *marae*. Their stones remain[3] but the sculptures have departed to a new home in Australia. Their presence adds meaning to the other works surrounding them in this exhibition as they have a living purpose and a family. Their mute existence acknowledges the families and Ta'unga from whence they came, their homes throughout Pacifica.

Though much is unknown about their dislocation, their names and genealogy, their existence is a mute reminder to this truth, the art form of our ancestors and families.

Eruera Te Whiti Nia, Rio Rangatira, Taputapuatea, Avarua

1 The Ta'unga is the ritual specialist, a priest, and a sculptor who creates the art object. This position is known as Tohuga, Ta'ung, or Tufunga in other Polynesian languages.

2 *taiki* n. one of the ancient spears; an ancient implement used as a spade for digging or weeding; the blade was oval-shaped (Savage, *A dictionary of the Maori language of Rarotonga*, 1962).

3 A stone was placed at the base of each of the two sculptures. It contained their *vaerua* or spirit.

Cook Islands, Mangaia

COOK ISLANDS, MANGAIA

Mangaia, a roughly circular raised atoll of around 51 square kilometres and just nine kilometres from one side to the other, is one of the smaller islands in central Polynesia. A 100-metre wide elevated platform of old coral reef runs around the island, just inland from the coast. In the centre is an eroded volcanic cone. A swamp between the remnants of the mountain and the edge of the raised reef platform is used for growing taro. The island is 200 kilometres south-east of Rarotonga and about the same distance south-west of the island of Mauke in the Nga-Pu-Toru island group. Captain James Cook gave the name Hervey Island to Manuae in 1773 and, for much of the nineteenth century, the islands of Rarotonga, Mangaia, Aitutaki, Atiu, Mauke, Mitiaro and Manuae were known as the Hervey Islands. At times, even the Austral Islands were included in this grouping. Today, the group is known as the southern Cook Islands and is distinct from the northern Cook Islands, which are a loose cluster of atolls 400 kilometres north-east of Rarotonga.

According to Mangaian oral traditions, the founding ancestor of Mangaia was Rangi, the son of Rongo, the dominant *atua* of Mangaia. Rangi became the first Mangaian high chief and the first inland high priest.[1] When he began to explore the island he met a female spirit, Echo, who lived in a cave and was the mother of many spirits associated with various plants.[2] Spirits on Mangaia are known generically as *aitu* and are understood to have occupied the island before humans.

There were many *atua* on Mangaia, some of which were represented in the images collected in 1823 by Rev John Williams and George Platt of the London Missionary Society. Rev William Wyatt Gill, a missionary to the region in the 1850s, observed and recorded details of the *atua* that were considered to be of national (island-wide) significance.[3] In summary, he found:

- Rongo was the main protective (tutelar) god of Mangaia. He received human sacrifices and was represented by two stone figures at the Orongo *marae*. Sometimes associated with war, Rongo was variously connected with agriculture, dance and kite flying. He was linked to three *marae* on Mangaia.

- Motoro was an *atua* embodied in three forms including sennit work, a type of nettle tree and a particular bird. Motoro was the son of Tangiia of Rarotonga who sailed to Mangaia but was killed by his brother during the journey. His people, the dominant tribe of Ngariki, later erected a *marae* to honour him.
- Tane, the younger brother of Rongo, was represented on Mangaia as an *atua* through four different manifestations. His associations included Matariki (the Pleiades or Seven Sisters star cluster), kite flying, various birds, particular fish and sennit work. He was also known as an *atua* who ate people.
- Te A'io was an *atua* embodied in an eel and a shark. An early holder of the title of high chief, he was killed for wearing a red flower behind his ear in the sacred district of Keia.
- Two separate *atua*—Tekuraaki and Utakea—were embodied in a type of kingfisher. The *atua* Tekuraaki was introduced by Tui, an early immigrant from Rarotonga. Utakea was one of Motoro's brothers.
- Turanga, also known as Matarau, *atua*, embodied in a type of lizard.
- Teipe, *atua*, embodied in the centipede.
- Kereteki, *atua*, no physical incarnation.
- Tangiia, *atua*, no physical incarnation, may well be a deified presence of Tangiia the navigator. This *atua* was considered to be a younger brother of Rongo.

This list of the major *atua* of Mangaia provides examples of the typical *atua* that were found on all the Polynesian islands except Rapa Nui. They consisted of deified ancestors, deified spirits or life forces, and a very old *atua* that was most likely the deified ancestor of the chief of the original inhabitants of the island.

1 Reilly 2009, p 20.
2 Gill 1876, pp 114–117.
3 Reilly 2009, pp 42–46.

TANGIIA

Mangaia, Cook Islands, central Polynesia
Collected by Rev John Williams, 1823
sennit (coconut fibre), bark cloth, feathers
44 cm

Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, Cambridge University, 1907.341

It is strange that this figure is the only known surviving object linked to the great thirteenth-century navigator Tangiia (Tangi'ia), who transformed so much of central Polynesia. Tangiia was a major focus of ritual on Mangaia, and at least one sacred enclosure bore his name.

Made from bark cloth and frigate-bird feathers wrapped around a central sennit core, and shaped roughly into human form, this image of Tangiia is not an arbitrary construction.

A large number of the god figures or idols collected by the London Missionary Society (LMS) are made from feathers, many of them originating from the central Cook Islands.[1] Some of the feathers are small and red, and used to attract *atua* to the god figure. Others, such as those on this figure, are flight feathers from long-distance, ocean-going birds, such as frigate birds. Given that ocean crossings were one of the greatest hazards for Polynesian people before the twentieth century, it would not have passed their notice that ocean-going birds, with their sophisticated inbuilt navigation system, rarely got lost.

Feathers from birds capable of navigating long distances are appropriately included in art objects that were used to communicate with great human navigators of the past.

For a long time this figure wore the museum label:

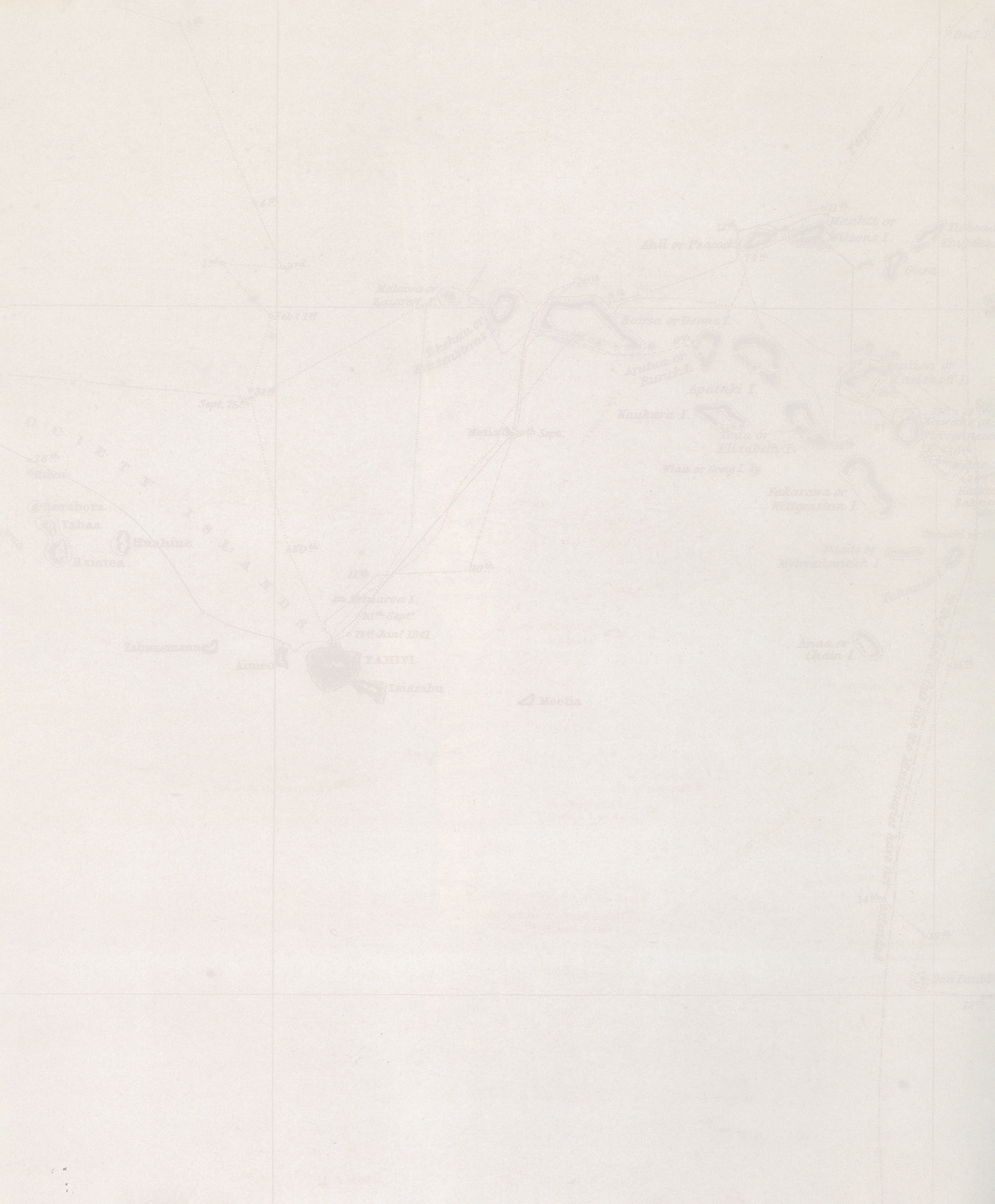
> Tangua a mighty god from Mangaia. Said to be the progenitor of the present inhabitants and deities. Human sacrifices were offered.[2]

Missionary Rev William Wyatt Gill, who worked on Mangaia, recorded a number of people, gods and sacred enclosures named Tangiia.[3]

- The great warrior chief Tangiia, who came from Tahiti, was one of the first settlers on the island of Rarotonga.[4] His son Motoro was drowned by his brother at sea. This Tangiia was afterwards worshipped at Mangaia.
- The Cave of Tangiia, almost 61 metres deep, was formerly regarded as the abode of the god Tangiia, whose name means 'a murmuring' of waters.[5] This Tangiia was supposed to be enshrined in the ironwood idol that was sent to the LMS's museum, but is now lost. He was understood to be the fourth son of Vatea (noon) and Papa (foundation). Both Vatea and Papa are *atua* enshrined in mythology throughout Polynesia, but their fourth son Tangiia is restricted to central Polynesia.
- Gill mentions a sacred grove (*marae*) associated with Tangiia, located on a pleasant fertile slope near a lake. He said that worshippers of this god were once numerous and powerful, but being devoted to furnishing sacrifices to Rongo, eventually became almost extinct. A famous priest named Tangiia lived on the south of Mangaia, on the margin of a little lake. He was the guardian of the *marae* and greatly feared on account of his supposed supernatural powers and his consumption of young children as a relish for his kava.

The warrior chief Tangiia who came from Tahiti is the great navigator from the thirteenth century, and a major Polynesian figure. People throughout Polynesian remember him in myth and he was thought to be almost supernatural in his powers. It is not certain that this Tangiia is the great *atua* who was worshipped with human sacrifice on the *marae* by the lake in the south of Mangaia. The immense prestige and *mana* of Tangiia the navigator, however, and the presence of long-distance ocean birds on this small figure, suggests a strong link between the two and that the figure was used by people to connect to Tangiia the navigator.

1 See King 2011, pp 90–100.
2 Hiroa 1944, pp 366–67.
3 Gill 1894.
4 See Te Arii-tara-are 1919.
5 Gill 1894, pp 72–73.


TAHITI
Meetia
Maitea or Lancaster I.
Aitutaki or Hervey I.
Manuae or Scilly I.
Motu Iti or Bird I.
Mauke or Wilsons I.
Rakahanga
Manihiki
Penrhyn I.
Nassau I.
Palmerston I.
Suwarrow I.
Manahiki or Humphrey I.
Rakahanga or Reirson I.
Pukapuka or Danger I.
Nassau or Byron I.
Rarotonga
Aitutaki
Manuae or Scilly I.
Motu Iti or Bird I.
Mauke or Wilsons I.
Rakahanga
Manihiki
Penrhyn I.
Nassau I.
Palmerston I.
Suwarrow I.
Manahiki or Humphrey I.
Rakahanga or Reirson I.
Pukapuka or Danger I.
Nassau or Byron I.
Rarotonga
Aitutaki

Austral Islands

AUSTRAL ISLANDS

The Austral Islands, now part of French Polynesia, are a string of five inhabited islands lying at the south-eastern end of the 2000-kilometre-long archipelago that includes the Cook Islands to the north. Between 150 and more than 500 kilometres separate the islands and each one is as unique as its inhabitants. Sculptural images were created on all the islands before the arrival of Christian missionaries, but very little of this art survived beyond the first few years of contact with the West.

Rapa, also known as Rapa Iti, is the southernmost island of the archipelago (English navigator and explorer George Vancouver recorded it as Oparo in 1791). In the late-eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the people lived in fortified villages on top of tall, barely accessible mountain peaks. When foreign ships arrived, only war-like men would come to meet the foreigners; women, children and the elderly were kept hidden. Unfortunately, slavers soon discovered Rapa, and liquor and disease devastated the population.

When John Davies of the London Missionary Society (LMS) arrived on Rapa in 1826, he found that the religious system of the people was similar to that of Tahiti, although the gods had different names.

> The principal idol was called *Paparua*; it was formed of cocoa-nut husk, curiously braided, and shaped into a kind of cylinder, full in the centre, and smaller at the ends, and was not more than two or three inches long. To the favour of this god they sought for victory in war, recovery from sickness, and abundance of turtle. *Poere* was another of their gods; it was of stone, twelve or fifteen inches in length. It was fixed in the ground, and invoked on the launching of a canoe, and the opening of a newly-built house; and on its will the supply of water in the springs was supposed to depend. The favour of the gods was propitiated by prayers, offerings, and sacrifices; human victims were not included among the latter, which principally consisted in fish.[1]

Recent archaeology has found evidence of human occupation around or just after 1000 AD. Despite the similarities in the names Rapa Iti and Rapa Nui (Easter Island), archaeologists have not found any evidence on Rapa of a link between the two islands.[2]

Ra'ivavae (Raivavae, Raivavai, Laivavai, Vavitao, Vavitu) is the next island north in the chain, more than 500 kilometres from Rapa. The island has 16 square kilometres of usable land and, following a common central Polynesian tradition, the island was divided into two main groupings that were named after its legendary first settlers, Taniau and Tiari'i. One group held the north, the other the part to the south of the main dividing range.[3] The island was also divided into 15 clan territories that extended from the central mountain range to the coast. The people lived in large houses that accommodated 30–50 people, usually three generations together. At least 80 *marae* are known on Ra'ivavae.

The people are now known all over the world for their carved drums and paddles. They specialised in the *burin* (a cutting tool) made from shark tooth, which they worked in a style related to that

of Mangaia, an island more than 1000 kilometres to the north-west. Very few of the pre-Christian figures that they carved in wood and stone survive. William Ellis recorded that

> Their idols were of stone, which appeared a kind of cellular lava, of a light ferruginous colour. They were generally rudely carved imitations of the human figure.[4]

The stone figures erected on eight of the *marae* on Ra'ivavae are unique in the Austral Islands. At least one *marae* contained more than 20 figures,[5] three of which are now in the grounds of Tahiti's Musée Gauguin. Another, collected by naturalist Samuel Stutchbury in 1826,[6] resembles aspects of the wood figure from Ra'ivavae (p 84).

Tubua'i (Tubuai, Toubouai, Tupuai) is 185 kilometres north-west of Ra'ivavae and 210 kilometres south-east of Rurutu. While the original inhabitants had a long history of relationships with the population of both of these neighbouring islands, they developed a unique identity of their own.

Although Captain James Cook found Tubua'i in 1777 on his third voyage, he did not go ashore. In 1789, Fletcher Christian and the other 24 mutineers from HMS *Bounty* tried to make Tubua'i their home but quit after several turbulent months.

James Morrison, boatswain's mate on the *Bounty*, wrote an account of the mutineers' time on Tubua'i. It contains references to wood images, *marae* and burial practices. He describes the houses as oval in shape, about 12 to 24 metres long, 4.5 to nine metres wide and about as many high. They had thatched roofs and the entrances were carved from wood and painted red to depict men and women. Internal floors were covered with grass. A stone tier in the middle of the house separated men and women. The men's section included a section for burying the males of the family. This area was enclosed by a tier of flat stones upended to create a fence 1.2 or 1.5 metres high and was *taboo* to women.

> in this place they keep the Images of their Fore fathers or Tutelar deitys, as they beleive that their Souls are fond of seeing respect paid to their remains, and that they always hover about the place of these representatives. They are Curiously Carved and decorated with human hair, & the teeth and Nails of their departed friends, red feathers, & Pearl Shells neatly disposed.[7]

Just before Christian was about to burn the house of the chief Tinnarow (Tinarau) in an attempt to control a dispute, his men raided it and removed clubs, spears and

> two Curious Carved Images of their Houshold Gods, which were decorated with Pearl Shells, Human Hair teeth & Nails cut in a very Curious Manner, and round them was placed a kind of Grove of red feathers from the tail of the Tropic birds.[8]

These are the only extant records of the ancestor figures of Tubua'i, for the people burnt everything in the Christian iconoclasm of the early 1820s. There are the remains of 27 *marae* that fell into disuse at that time.[9]

Rurutu was called Hitiroa (Oheteroa) by Tupaia, the Raiatean priest–navigator who joined Cook's expedition in 1769.

Archaeologists have found that the island was probably first settled by people from the southern Cook Islands around 900–1000 AD. The people maintained contact with the Society Islands and the Cook Islands for 400 years during the Archaic Phase of eastern Polynesia before they ceased long-distance sailing.[10] Many *marae* were built around the island during the Classic Phase,

which began on Rurutu in the late-seventeenth century and lasted until the missionaries arrived and converted the population overnight in 1821. Around 27 religious sites including *marae* are known on Rurutu.

During the Classic Phase, the people lived in similar houses to those on Tubua'i; the oval houses were between 12 and 22 metres long and could accommodate a family group of about 20 people. The largest settlement by far was Vitaria on the north-west end of the island, on the lowland near the sea. At its peak Vitaria had almost 300 houses and a population of around 3000. This city was occupied from around 1100 AD until the second half of the eighteenth century. It was abandoned during the reign of Chief Teauroa who, by using his diplomatic skills and warlike abilities, conquered all Rurutu then moved the political centre of the island to his own village of Mo'era'i, where it remains today.[11]

When the missionaries of the LMS landed on Rurutu in the 1830s, they noted:

> Their temples were numerous, and their idols, especially their great god, Taaroa, were among the most singular we have met with in the Pacific. Their priests, who were their physicians, maintained greater influence over the people, though their system of worship appears less sanguinary than that of their more civilised neighbours. They were addicted to war. Their helmets were among the most imposing in the South Sea Islands, and their spears, which were made of the hard dark wood of the casuarina, were often from twelve to eighteen feet long.[12]

'Oro, the politically dominant *atua* from Tahiti, was also present on Rurutu at this time, but the only extant record indicates that some of the land was sacred to him.

The island of **Rimatara** had a population of about 300 in the early nineteenth century. It was widely known in central Polynesia for its beautiful red, green and purple lorikeets,[13] especially their red feathers. The people worshipped idols, but destroyed them in 1821, following the lead of the people of Rurutu.[14] None of the idols appear to have survived, and no descriptions of them are known. Rimatara, one of the last Polynesian islands to receive European visitors, was found in 1821 by Captain Samuel Pinder Henry of Tahiti, who returned the following year with two teachers from Bora Bora in the Society Islands. The remains of only four *marae* are known.

1 Ellis 1831, vol 3, pp 364–65. John Davies was referred to as Mr Davis in Ellis.
2 Anderson & Kennett (eds) 2012.
3 The highest mountain on Ra'ivavae is named Hiro, most likely in honour of the great navigator.
4 Ellis 1831, p 378.
5 ibid., p 376.
6 Now at the Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford University, 1886.1.1327, a female figure recorded with the name Aroonoona (today spelt Arununa), 160 cm tall, the hands held at shoulder height as though she is a weightlifter performing a shoulder press.
7 Morrison 1789, 17 September.
8 ibid., 25 August.
9 www.tahitiheritage.pf
10 Vérin 1969.
11 Vérin 1964; Kellum 1964.
12 Ellis 1831, vol 3, p 394.
13 Vini kuhlii, a type of parakeet.
14 Ellis 1831, vol 3 p 390.

DEIFIED ANCESTOR WITH THE NAME A'A

Rurutu, Austral Islands, central Polynesia
late-18th to early 19th century
wood
117 cm
British Museum, London, Oc,LMS.19

This figure, perhaps the most famous of all sculptures from Polynesia, is now thought to be A'a, a deified ancestor of the people who originally populated the island of Rurutu.

At one level the figure is human, with head, torso, arms, legs and male sexual apparatus; however, small human-like figures replace its facial features, breasts and navel. They are attached to the cheeks, under the chin, to the upper arms, around the belly, to the outer thighs and knees, and to the door of the internal cavity at the back of the figure. In all there are 30 small figures, each unique, mostly attached at the back of their shoulders and buttocks. Their arching backs suggest joy and happiness as they seem to wriggle free of the main figure. None appear to have sexual organs. Some have legs and arms flung wide apart, others have knees facing forward and hands in front of their bodies.

At another level, which is especially noticeable when viewed in profile, the figure is an erect penis. This symbolism suggests that he is an image of a source of fecundity, a generator of life.

This was one of several 'idols' handed over to Rev John Williams and Lancelot Threlkeld of the London Missionary Society, when they were based at Raiatea in the Society Islands, in 1821.

The young chief of Rurutu, Au'ura, converted to Christianity after disease devastated the population of the island. Inspired by the new religion that he studied on Raiatea, he hoped it would be more effective than his traditional beliefs in combating the deadly illness.

He returned to Rurutu on the missionary brig *Hope* with two teachers from Raiatea, and immediately brought about a confrontation by praying to the Christian god on land sacred to 'Oro, an *atua* owned by Pomare, king of the Society Islands. The next day he held a meeting on 'Oro's sacred place and broke major *taboos* by having the men, women and children eat together, and the women eat pork and turtle meat, which were normally prohibited to them. When the people did not die overnight for breaking so many taboos at once, the spell of the old religion was broken.

Au'ura sent his own idol to the captain of the *Hope*, who sailed that evening for Cape Horn, en route to England. Its fate is not known. The people destroyed their sacred enclosures and their idols, except those to be sent to the missionaries.

A month later, the missionary boat that the *Hope* had towed to Rurutu returned to Raiatea with idols from Rurutu, including this figure. It was exposed in the chapel at Raiatea with several other Rurutuan idols. When the panel in the back was opened, 24 smaller figures, now lost, were removed.

Williams described the chapel scene, a brilliant piece of theatre:

> The chapel was lighted up with ten chandeliers, made of wood neatly turned; cocoa-nut shells were substituted for lamps. The middle chandelier held eighteen lights, twelve in the lower circle, and six in the upper; the others held ten and twelve each. When lighted up, they presented to the natives a most brilliant appearance, and called forth expressions of astonishment and delight. In the course of the evening the rejected idols were publicly exhibited from the pulpit. One in particular, Aa, the national god of Rurutu, excited considerable interest; for, in addition to his being bedecked with little gods outside, a door was discovered at his back; on opening which, he was found to be full of small gods; and no less than twenty-four were taken out, one after another, and exhibited to public view. He is said to be the ancestor by whom their island was peopled, and who after death was deified.[1]

It is not clear why *Missionary sketches*, published in 1824, 13 years before Williams' *Missionary enterprises*, referred to the figure as Taaroa Upoo Vahu because Taaroa (Tangaroa) is rarely identified as the name for an idol or objectified *atua*. It was also referred to as Taaroa in William Ellis's 1829 *Polynesian researches*:

> a front and profile view of Taaroa, the supreme deity of Polynesia; who is generally regarded as the creator of the world, and the parent of gods and men.[2]

Taaroa is the Tahitian name of the ancient *atua* Tangaroa. *Upoo* means 'the human head; the head of a party'. *Vahu* is not in Davies' 1851 Tahitian dictionary. *Vaho* (adverb) means 'out, outside, not inside'. It has been recognised that *vahu* is reminiscent of *varu* meaning 'eight', as in Maui-i-Upo'o Varu (Maui with eight heads), and that the number eight was often a conventional reference to old political and territorial units. One divine entity, like Ta'aroa, could symbolise the consolidation of several districts under the authority of one leader, who was known as a 'king' at the time of the arrival of the missionaries.[3]

Close examination shows that the figure was carved without the use of metal tools, which dates it to before Western contact. Aa (now known as A'a)[4] as a deified ancestor fits the pattern for almost all wood figures originating in central Polynesia.

1 Williams 1837, pp 44–45.
2 Ellis 1829, vol 2, frontispiece, p 220.
3 Lavondès 1996, p 316.
4 Vérin 1969.

IMAGE ASSOCIATED WITH TANGAROA

Attributed to Rurutu, Austral Islands, central Polynesia
late-18th to early 19th century
wood, sennit (coconut fibre)
80.6 cm
British Museum, London, Oc,LMS.168

Tangaroa (also known as Ta'aroa or Taaroa in central Polynesia) is one of the few *atua* known throughout Polynesia, and was probably the first *atua* in the Pacific. Most likely, Tangaroa was originally a deified ancestor from Samoa. In spite of being such a widespread *atua*, there are few documented representations of him, or objects directly associated with him. The few that are known to exist are from small islands with low populations.

Two London Missionary Society missionaries, Rev Daniel Tyerman and George Bennet, obtained this figure in 1821 from marae Naripaki, somewhere in central Polynesia. Since all the sacred enclosures were destroyed and their names seem to be lost, all we are left with is the style of the object, which resembles that originating on Rurutu.

Originally this image held eight arching figures around the perimeter, but one has been broken and lost since it entered the British Museum. These perimeter figures have arched backs, which may be a stylistic convention, for very similar figures are found on A'a (p 76), or more likely they represent human life erupting from the central mystical core, with the two nipple-like mounds on each side providing the focus.

At the top end of the perimeter are two back-to-back figures facing outwards. On each side, near their feet, are two more 'nipple' shapes. At least one of the figures has its right arm and hand curved in front of its body, similar to some of the small figures on A'a, and to the posture of a presumably Tahitian figure that was collected in 1773–1774 during Captain James Cook's second voyage.[1]

At the end of the handle is a four-legged being, which has been described as 'a distinctive acrobatic backward-arching figure, also found on whisk handles'.[2] It is possible that this figure is arching backwards, but the artist has emphasised the outer ridges of the arches, giving the impression that the figure is sagging, decomposing on the bones of its arches. This contrasts with the vigorous fertility found at the other end of the work.

An object made from sennit and two pieces of tapered wood are tied to the upper end of the shaft. This section is most likely the active ingredient, the link to the atua. *Taura*, a word previously used in Rurutu ritual process, refers to the cord by which priests were deemed to be physically bound to *atua* during rituals.[3]

1 Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford, 1886.1.1424. Collected by Johann Reinhold Forster and George Forster in 1773–1774.
2 Hooper 2006, p 202.
3 Jessop 2007, p 130, referring to Wilson 1799, pp 347–48.

'STAFF GOD'

Rurutu, Austral Islands, central Polynesia
late-18th to early 19th century
wood
55.5 cm

Menil Collection, Houston (on loan from Adelaide de Menil), A 7883

This beautiful and superbly balanced work of art has been attributed to the island of Rurutu in the Austral Islands. It has been supposed to be the head of a spear[1] or tip of a lance; an English auction house referred to it as an 'oak stationery rack'. Today it is known as a 'staff god'.

It is undoubtedly early,[2] for non-metal tools were used to carve it from the hard wood that is known as *toa*.[3] The handle, or shaft, is broken at the end, but the remainder tapers gradually to the first group of carved objects, which have been described as 'stylised pigs' heads' or cleats, but which also look like developing pupae. These exquisitely proportioned objects are repeated up the shaft in sections, including on the chevron-covered surface of the squared-off central section; this is surmounted by a second grouping and five pairs adorn the two vertical projections, or tangs, that arise from the top section.

Given the cleat-like elements on this figure, the most closely-related objects known from central Polynesia are the staff gods from the Nga-Pu-Toru islands, Mitiaro in particular (p 49), 600 kilometres along the archipelago north-west of Rurutu. Some of the cleats on the Mitiaro staff gods bear evidence of their use to attach red feathers to the figure.

None of the cleats on this Rurutu figure bear evidence of having had string tied around them, however, and much of the surface around the cleats looks decidedly crusty. It is possible that the 'cleats' are not physical anchors for something, but had meaning in themselves.

The London Missionary Society (LMS) narration of the exhibition of the 'idols' of Rurutu in the chapel at Raiatea in 1821, following the conversion of the people of Rurutu to Christianity,[4] describes several of the objects being made from sennit, woven into the shape of a man and holding inside them relics, including small gods or family gods that belonged to ancient chiefs, and spear tips and slings from the warriors of old.[5] Around 1835, Rev John Williams gave a fragment of a spear tip from the Austral Islands to his fellow missionary Reverend Prout. Another LMS missionary, George Bennet, reported two spear fragments from Rurutu. Whether these three 'spear fragments' were parts of spears, or superficially resembled a spearhead similar to this piece, is not known.

1 Gathercole, Kaeppler & Newton 1979, p 158.
2 Sotheby's, in their auction catalogue of 1978, refer to the possibility that this piece was collected by Omai, Banks, or Solander (Sotheby Parke Bernet 29 July 1978, p 173).
3 *Casuarina equisetifolia*.
4 London Missionary Society, October 1822.
5 Lavondès 1996, p 315, 320.

SACRED FLY WHISK (*TAHIRI RA'A*)

probably Rurutu or Tubua'i, Austral Islands, central Polynesia
18th to early 19th century
wood, sennit (coconut fibre), vegetable fibre, human hair, shell
56 cm
Musée d'Histoire Naturelle, Lille, 990.2.2548

This work of art contains a mystery. With its double figure at the top, long carved shaft, and sennit fronds, this is a fly whisk, or lash, but it is certainly too delicate to be wielded vigorously. The shells attached to it are similar to shells that were used in other parts of central Polynesia to contain a 'soul'. Everything about this object indicates that it is old, and that it was made for religious or sacred purposes.

Missionaries on Tahiti mentioned priests using whisks to brush flies from a freshly sacrificed corpse. Fly whisks collected from Tahiti in the early nineteenth century were similar to this type in their binding and fronds, but they had handles of bird bone (frigate bird ulnae) instead of wood.

James Morrison, in his journal of the *Bounty* mutineers' brief stay on Tubua'i in 1789, wrote of old men with highly finished walking staves and fly flaps made of toa wood. On top of the staves was usually a carved double figure of a man with one body and two heads. The staves, sharpened at the end, were used to dispatch human sacrifices in the *marae*.[1]

This type of fly whisk was described as a lash in an 1825 report from the US schooner *Dolphin*:

> At Toubouai, we added considerably to our collection of curiosities. The most ingeniously wrought article, was a lash, used by the natives for brushing the flies off of their backs. The handles were carved to represent a man's face, or some animal familiar to them. The lash itself was, in several strands, finely braided from twine of the cocoa-nut husk.[2]

There are 59 related fly whisks[3] known in museum and private collections. Only two have solid provenance. One was collected by Joseph Banks during Captain James Cook's first voyage from Oheteroa (today known as Rurutu) and depicted in a drawing by John Frederick Miller in 1771.[4] The other was obtained on Tahiti in 1839.[5] Very few of these early fly whisks are damaged.

At the top of this whisk, the heads of the two back-to-back figures are separated enough to indicate discrete beings. Knobs on the sides of the heads, much worn from handling, could represent ears, although other types of fly whisk from this region have similar knobs that are placed higher on the heads. They may represent a specific hairstyle, like that from the Marquesas Islands (p 149), but their prevalence suggests that they had significance beyond style.

Tilted eyes and smiling, slightly lop-sided mouths animate the two faces. The chevron markings that are carved into the forearms and the insides of the legs is a relatively rare feature. The shoulders are noticeably squared and the hands rest above the protruding belly and indented navel; their position, when compared with other central Polynesian figures in this exhibition, signifies that these are probably not ancestor images. The figures have neither breasts nor genitalia.

A hole between the two sets of arms supports four pieces of softly worn shell. If this were the only fly whisk with such attachments they could be taken as decoration, but we know of five others with shells attached either to the ends of the fronds or to the figures. Rarotongan 'staff gods' had similar shells wrapped with red feathers in tapa around the middle of the figure to contain the *manava*, the soul or source of its emotions.

The fronds—curling strands of sennit—and their binding are in excellent condition, and may have been replaced regularly. These fronds are similar to the sennit 'tails' on the broken ends of 'staff gods' or 'skeletons of gods' from the Nga-Pu-Toru Islands.[6]

A disc separates the decorated shaft and the section attached to the fronds. Around its perimeter are eight carved elements, which also occur on an object described as the head of a lance or spear, collected in the Marquesas Islands by Captain Aulick in 1837,[7] and on another resembling a dagger, collected on the island of Mauke by chaplain Richard Bloxam, of HMS *Blonde* in 1825.[8]

1 Morrison 1789.
2 Paulding 1831, p 249.
3 See Rose 1979 for a discussion of the three types of 'Austral Islands fly whisk'.
4 British Museum Oc,TAH.27, identified by Adrienne Kaeppler from the pen and wash drawing by John Frederick Miller annotated by Joseph Banks 'a. from Oheteroa' in the British Library, London, Add. MS 23921, f.53(a). An image is shown in Joppien & Smith 1985, vol 1, p 155, 1.94.
5 University of Philadelphia Museum 97-120-368, collected in 1839 in Tahiti by Titian Ramsay Peale, a naturalist with the United States Exploring Expedition of 1838–1842 (the Wilkes Expedition).
6 Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, Cambridge University Z 6046 (105); Z 6045 A; Z 6045 B. All from Mauke Island, Nga-Pu-Toru group, Cook Islands.
7 Smithsonian Institution, Washington DC. E 3545-0.
8 Bishop Museum, Honolulu. C 10190.

FEMALE FIGURE

Ra'ivavae, Austral Islands, central Polynesia
late-18th to early 19th century
wood, blue paint
65.5 cm
British Museum, London, Oc1854,1229.120

Rarotonga and other Polynesia islands are known for their male images; more unusual are the islands, such as Ra'ivavae, that are known for female figures.

This figure as been misattributed several times. An early label described it as the 'front of a house—Feejee Isles'. In 1967 it was represented as originating on Rarotonga in the Cook Islands. The physical form of the figure, however, particularly the shoulder cover,[1] position of the breasts and the motifs carved into the surface of the wood, match those of stone figures that are known to have been created on the island of Ra'ivavae. As there is no information about its nature on record at the British Museum, and there is only one other wood figure known from Ra'ivavae,[2] its purpose can only be supposed.

The figure is obviously female and photographs show her naked except for a beautiful shell necklace. Certain lighting reveals that much of the front of her face and body was painted with a blue dye, most likely the synthetic ultramarine that was used to whiten naval officer's uniforms.

She is depicted standing with her legs apart, and her hands positioned on her torso on either side of where her navel could be expected to have been carved. Instead, her hands are lifting her skirt, which is V-shaped and in four layers, exposing her genitals. Her clearly depicted labia are open and her knees are forward and apart, giving the impression of receptivity.

Such a sexually explicit figure is rare in Polynesia. As her skirt and her headdress are depicted realistically, it is possible that the figure is a literal portrait of a woman. While the markings on her face and those visible on her body above her uplifted skirt suggest tattooing, the people of Ra'ivavae and those from the island of Rapa apparently did not practice tattooing.[3] It is possible that the markings depict a design that was painted on certain women during specific occasions.

The *'arioi*, a group known in the Society Islands and considered to be the upper level of polite society, was present on Ra'ivavae in 1819. It was also known for liberal sexual behaviour and an intimate connection with the worship of the *atua* 'Oro.[4] However, no sculpture has been identified that has a clear association with the *'arioi*.

Anthropologist and linguist Frank Stimson visited Ra'ivavae in 1938 and compiled a manuscript (unpublished) outlining a pre-Christian cultural world in which 'erotic behaviour, manipulation of the female sexual organs, and other sexual practices ... played a central role in the indigenous religion'.[5] Marshall followed up on Stimson's work and found 'abundant use of sexual motifs in the prehistoric art work, in various stone figures, in the religious temples (marae) and in the oral traditions and language.'[6]

1 Large curved shape with triangular serrations, extending from shoulder to shoulder, above the breasts.
2 Auckland Museum 31499 (Oldman 413) is the only other known wood female figure; however, a number of female figures carved in stone are known from Ra'ivavae.
3 According to Macmillan Brown 1915, p 77.
4 Gunson 1966, p 202, fn 21.
5 Green 1962, p 276.
6 ibid.

ENIGMATIC FIGURE

Hervey Islands (19th-century name for the archipelago that includes the Cook Islands and the Austral Islands), central Polynesia
19th century or earlier
wood
42 cm

Otago Museum, Dunedin, O 50.066

This figure is one of the great puzzles in Polynesian art. William Oldman acquired it, and published a description of it as:

> 423 Deity. Hard dark-brown wood; curious elongated form, right arm broken; face is very curiously formed; eyes are indicated by three ridges. May possibly represent Rimaroa (long arms), a deity of war. See Ellis, p. 193, Height, 16¼ins. Rarotonga.[1]

Oldman did not record where he found this elongated figure, nor the origin of the Rarotonga provenance for the piece. It is clearly an old work, but apart from the forehead shape, is unlike other Polynesian figures. It does not display the robust build, particularly in the legs, that is characteristic of figures from the region.

The wave-like forehead and eyes are striking. The wood female figure from Ra'ivavae, which is now in the Auckland Museum,[2] is the only other known figure with a wave-like forehead.

The Ra'ivavae provenance of the Auckland figure is unquestioned, even though she was once known as an 'Indian God'.[3] She is robust, her hands are posed traditionally (beside her navel), and she is covered with motifs carved with a shark-tooth burin that are typical of Ra'ivavae.[4] A pre-restoration photograph[5] shows her character and her beauty. With her 'shoulder cape' covering her wide-set breasts, she is directly related in style with the Ra'ivavae stone female figures.

Whether there is a connection between the Otago Museum's figure and the Auckland 'goddess', other than a wavy eyebrow, is difficult to ascertain. It is possible that the Otago Museum's figure is a survivor of the period before the people of Ra'ivavae developed their renowned technique for surface decoration.

The feet on Otago's figure have two toes and share a distinctive inverted-V shape on the side of the feet, just above the sole, which is similar to work from Rarotonga. The knee joints resemble grass stems. Somebody has carved the raw elements of female genitalia onto the remnants of a mutilated penis and, unlike almost every Polynesian male figure in this catalogue, which display breasts or nipples, this figure lacks these details. There is a slight hint of a smile—perhaps we have been tricked.

The only marks that have obviously been made by metal tools are under the feet, where the figure was removed from something else, or at least worked to accommodate a supporting rod between its legs; the hole has since been plugged. There is no evidence of the use of metal tools on the figure itself, which suggests its age. It does not belong to any known art tradition and, apart from its wavy forehead and strange feet, it could be an orphan, a god without a people. It could even be one of the missing and unknown 'idols' from Rimatara.

1 Oldman 1938, p 4.
2 Auckland Museum 31499 (previously Oldman 413).
3 Oldman 1953, p 21.
4 Particularly the surface decoration found on their paddles, see Richards 2012.
5 Hans Sibbelee, Amsterdam, c 1955, in Richards 2012, p 113.

Ra'ivavae, Austral Islands late-eighteenth/early nineteenth century, wood and plant material, 65.4 x 24.2 x 17.8 cm
Auckland War Memorial Museum – Tamaki Paenga Hira
Oldman Collection 413, 31499

KAVA BOWL

Ra'ivavae, Austral Islands, central Polynesia
late-18th to early 19th century
wood (*Callophyllum sp*)
64.8 cm

Canterbury Museum, Christchurch, E 149.651

Until the mid-nineteenth century kava was used over much of Polynesia in rituals and by people who liked the effect of drinking it. Kava-drinking fell out of favour when Christianity replaced the traditional religious system.

This kava bowl, attributed to Ra'ivavae on the basis of style, is one of the few surviving kava implements from central and eastern Polynesia. A shark tooth burin was probably used to produce much of the surface decoration, which is in the distinctive style that is better known from the hundreds of paddles found in museums throughout the world.[1]

Of particular interest are the figures on the finial of eight dancing women or girls wearing headdresses with two lobes, one each side of the head. One head on the inside group has been replaced with an indistinct plaster head.

Women, particularly dancing women, were of major significance in the art traditions of Ra'ivavae.

1 Richards 2012 found 856 decorated Ra'ivavae paddles in museum collections. His article describes and analyses the motifs found on the paddles, which are also found on this bowl.

Tahiti and the Society Islands

TAHITI AND THE SOCIETY ISLANDS

Tahiti is the biggest island in central Polynesia, with two major volcanic centres and a fertile coastal plain. People first began inhabiting Tahiti and the neighbouring islands within the Society archipelago around 1000 years ago.

Taputapuatea, the largest and most significant ritual site in Polynesia, is located within Te Po at Opua, on the island of Raiatea. Taputapuatea, along with many other coastal ritual sites in the Society Islands, was associated with the *atua* 'Oro.

Many of the great Polynesian navigators set off on their voyages of discovery from Taputapuatea. They include Kupe, the discoverer of Aotearoa New Zealand; Tangiia-Nui, the great thirteenth-century navigator who spread Tahitian religious practices to many islands in central Polynesia; and, Hiro, known from Aotearoa New Zealand in the south to Hawai'i in the north. A number of islands in Polynesia have at least one sacred enclosure named Taputapuatea. Oral histories indicate that a stone containing a *mauri* (life force) was brought from Taputapuatea on Raiatea to establish a direct and tangible connection between the new sacred enclosure and its origins.[1]

Today, knowledge of the *atua* of Tahiti and the Society Islands tends to be restricted to two kinds of object, *to'o* and *ti'i*.

To'o are mysterious objects made from tightly woven sennit around a central core of wood or teeth. At least some *to'o* retain a lively presence into the twenty-first century, although many are now located in museum collections outside Polynesia. Most *to'o* are said to be associated with the *atua* 'Oro, but from the record made by the missionaries it would appear that many of the 'idols' associated with 'Oro were undecorated logs of wood.

Ti'i is a broad generic category and includes at least two distinct types of object: wood *ti'i* and stone *ti'i*. Carved wood figures were used as boundary markers, or as figures on Tahitian canoes that were used for war, sacred purposes or long-distance journeys. The boundary markers have all disappeared and are known only from a sketch made by natural history painter George Tobin, who sailed as a naval officer on the *Providence* under Captain William Bligh in 1792. The artists on Captain James Cook's three voyages—Hermann Spöring and Sydney Parkinson (first voyage), William Hodges (second voyage), and John Webber (third voyage)—made a substantial record

of the canoe figures. It is not clear, however, whether these canoe figures were known as *ti'i*, or if Europeans later applied this generic term to them.

The stone *ti'i* seemed to escape the eye of Cook's artists, as well as those who came later. These objects were probably used primarily in association with agricultural fertility, but also by sorcerers (p 102). Stone *ti'i* retain a presence that lasts many centuries and many people today do not like to possess or even touch them.

The sacred enclosures of Tahiti and the Society Islands, generally known as *marae* or *morai*, were active into the nineteenth century. Webber and Tobin also made sketches, among the last before the missionaries began to arrive in force in the early nineteenth century. Missionaries on Tahiti, especially those of the London Missionary Society, kept detailed diaries and later published their observations of the people and influential individuals, including Pomare (unifier, then king of Tahiti and Mo'orea, from around 1788 to 1791, then regent of Tahiti 1791 to 1803). These records provide a useful understanding of the role that *atua* played in the lives of the people, particularly those of influential leaders.

It is not clear today how well the objects in museum collections represent eighteenth-century Society Islands culture. From the sketches and drawings of Webber and Tobin we know that tall geometric objects carved in wood and known as *unu* were used on the *ahu*, a raised platform within an enclosed *marae*. None of these have survived, nor have the beautifully sparse god houses recorded as *Ewharra* by Parkinson when he drew them.

Contemporary museum collections hold much of the material of life on Tahiti in the eighteenth century; including such items as stone pounders, the occasional elegant wood stool, fly-whisk handles, *taumi* (presentation objects), a few wood figures, *to'o*, rare feathered headdresses, some equally rare and striking mourning costumes, carved treasure boxes, drums and more than 100 stone *ti'i*. The essence that made Tahiti so strong, so adventurous and so powerful is, however, not in museum collections, but nor has it been forgotten.

1 It was not recorded whether these stone *mauri* were carved or engraved. Nor is it known if they were the objects known today as stone *ti'i*.

WOOD FIGURES FROM THE SOCIETY ISLANDS

The wood figures from Tahiti, known generically as *ti'i*, are most likely to have been created as images of *atua*, probably deified ancestors, which were then attached to the prows and sterns of Tahitian warships, as seen in early Western depictions of Tahiti.

Characteristics of 21 freestanding wood figures[1] that were collected in the Society Islands have been identified. They include:

- Body position: most figures have a shortened, almost horizontal thigh, giving a standing figure the appearance of sitting.
- Eyes and mouth: five figures share the same style of eyes and mouth. Seven figures have a unique eye shape in the horizontal ridge, incised line, or valley across the centre of the eye. This style has also been found in the eyes of figures from Fiji (p 27) and Aotearoa New Zealand (p 212), which suggests they are ancient in origin.
- Shoulders: 15 figures have shoulders in a straight line behind the head. Only one, a female figure, has rounded shoulders.
- Sex: six figures are clearly male because they have a penis or scrotum. One is clearly female. The sexual organs of the others have either been removed or are indistinct.
- Breasts and nipples: 13 figures have nipples or small breasts. Seven of these figures are undoubtedly male; the only indisputably female figure does not have breasts.
- Buttocks: on almost every figure the buttocks are rounded. On several figures the buttocks project backwards and are a distinctive feature of the figure (eg p 96).
- Feet: all the figures have feet that were not part of a pedestal. Two of the figures have feet that appear to have been slotted into another structure.
- Height: the average height is around 46 centimetres, within a range of 23.2 to 65 centimetres.
- All *ti'i* have at least one hand on the belly, 19 have both. Most have five fingers on each hand, some have four, others three, and at least three figures have only two fingers on each hand.

Early Western depictions of Tahiti hold clues to the use of the figures. William Hodges' painting *Review of the war galleys at Tahiti* c 1775–1776[2] shows wood figures with square shoulders and rounded buttocks mounted at the top of tall structures rising from the back of the ships, and at least one such structure rising from the prows of the double-hulled ship in the foreground. He depicts similar figures in similar positions on the double-hulled war ships in his painting *The war boats of the island of Otaheite, and the Society isles* c 1776–1777.[3]

William Hodges, *Review of the war galleys at Tahiti*, c 1775–6, National Maritime Museum, London

From descriptions and images of eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century watercraft that were used in the Society Islands, and from William Ellis's *Polynesian researches* 1829, it is reasonably clear that wood figures were attached to canoes built for long-distance voyages that involved great risk, as well as to prestige, religious, or sacred vessels (*va'a ti'i*), and war ships.

The *va'a ti'i* were large vessels, like war canoes, strongly built and ornamented with carved figures, feathers and pennants.

In the oral tradition '*Te parau a Honoura*' (The legend of Honoura) collected by missionary Rev John Williams before 1839, a long-distance ship was launched with two women at the helm in search of their lover. At the figurehead of the ship stood an image of a warrior-god of the sea, the *atua* Ta'i-iti-te-araraa (Low-cry-on-awaking). Also on board were a temple and an altar to the *atua* 'Oro. A priest embarked, bringing with him 'Oro-taua ('Oro's trumpet) and the drum Tara-te-fei-arii. In her translation of this legend, Teuira Henry noted that it was always customary to have an image of a god upon the bow or bows of a ship, and that voyagers never travelled by ship without erecting on board a small *marae* (or 'holy place') of stones taken from a great *marae*, and an altar nearby.

While this legend and much other circumstantial evidence suggest that the wood *ti'i* figures from Tahiti were originally created as images of *atua* and attached to ships when needed, the relationship between the *atua* images as wood figures and the altar to the *atua* 'Oro is yet to be described.

1 Only those freestanding figures generally said to be *ti'i* were included in this survey. It does not include figures that are not clearly from the Society Islands, or those that seem to be part of another object, such as a fly whisk.

2 *The war boats of the island of Otaheite, and the Society isles, with a view of part of the harbour of Ohameneno [Haamanino], in the island of Ulietea [Raiatea], one of the Society Islands* in Joppien & Smith 1985, vol 2, p 82, pl 73.

3 Joppien & Smith 1985, vol 2, p 83, pl 75.

MALE *TI'I* FIGURE

Tahiti, Society Islands, central Polynesia
18th century or earlier
wood
57 cm
Bishop Museum, Honolulu, C.3132

This male figure from Tahiti possesses an undeniable presence, and is one of the great survivors from an earlier period.

Careful examination suggests that this wood figure was carved with non-metal tools, which indicates that he dates from the mid-eighteenth century, if not earlier. The sculptor was a central Polynesian artist working at a time when the Society and Marquesas islands used related art styles. The straight shoulder line and the depiction of the hands are found in both archipelagos.

The sculptor paid particular attention to the face and gave the eyes and mouth similar qualities, so that the eyelids could be lips, the eyes a tongue, and vice versa. This style is unique to the Society Islands, and is used for six of the 30 known freestanding figures from this region.[1] All these figures were created by different artists, indicating that the similarity in eyes and mouth was deliberate and part of the prescription for these figures.

The male figure has clearly delineated breasts that are most likely those of an old man. Other male figures from the Society Islands and, indeed, from much of Polynesia, also have visible breasts.[2] Breasts are often missing on female figures.

The figure's protruding navel and placement of the hands is probably a reference to the source of each human life. A seed sprouts first a root, then a stem, which grows into a tree and the seed is lost in the transformation—but not to someone who observes life and its development. Many Austronesian languages have a word or root for this source from which something grows.[3] In humans, the navel is the source of life for each individual, the connection to the mother. The figure's hands, positioned each side of this proudly protruding remnant, frame it and bring it into focus.

William Doty, a Presbyterian preacher and American consul in Tahiti, found this figure in about 1903, buried in a cave in the face of a cliff on the west side of Tahiti. With it were tapa (bark cloth), bones and two other wood figures—a female and a 'child'.

Records (including drawings and paintings) from the late-eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, particularly those from Captain James Cook's voyages and from the publications of the London Missionary Society, show similar wood figures positioned on both prow and stern of different types of Tahitian ships, in particular warships and *va'a ti'i* (sacred religious ships). See the accompanying section 'Wood figures from the Society Islands' (p 92).

1 Glasgow, Hunterian Museum GLAHM E.330; Honolulu, Bishop Museum C 3132; London, British Museum Oc,TAH.78.a; Neuchâtel, musée d'ethnographie V 169; Punaauia, Musée de Tahiti et des îles—Te Fare Manaha 71.1979.31.1; St Petersburg, Kunstkamera 736.226.

2 The male figure (1886.1.1425) in the Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford University, demonstrates this clearly, and is misclassified as female on the Pitt Rivers database. This figure was collected by Captain Frederick William Beechey RN, 1825–1828.

3 For example, in the Madara language of the Tabar Islands, part of New Ireland, the word for a source, such as when a person is the source of ritual, is '*vuna-*', as in *vuna-malaga* 'initiated leader in *malagan* ritual'. In the Tahitian language *tinana* is a word for source. Madara is an Austronesian language, related to the Polynesian languges.

Ti'i FIGURE

Tahiti, Society Islands, central Polynesia
18th or early 19th century
wood
51 cm

Kunstkamera (Peter the Great Museum of Anthropology and Ethnology, Russian Academy of Sciences), St Petersburg, 736.226

This figure, collected on a Russian voyage before 1826, was in a group of 303 pieces given by the Admiralty to the Peter the Great Museum in 1830.

It is not certain whether this figure represents a woman or a man. The inner core has rotted away, and the genitalia have disappeared. Breasts are found on male figures from the Society Islands, but on this figure they project to each side. The sculptor paid particular attention to the buttocks, which project in a distinctive way, making the figure noticeable even at a distance. These two characteristics suggest that the figure is more likely to be female.

The figure was probably used on a Tahitian ship, perhaps a sacred canoe, a war canoe, or a long-distance sailing canoe. The configuration of the feet, with heels protruding almost as much as the front of the feet, enabled the figure to be lashed to a canoe's platform tower and stand free, without risk of falling.

Around a quarter of the known wood figures from the Society Islands have the eyes and mouth depicted in the same manner (p 92). On this figure, however, the eyes and mouth are downward sloping flat planes. When used either on a ship or in a *marae*, the figure could have been covered in red ochre and the eye and mouth planes highlighted with a substance, such as pig fat, to make them shine. The figure, however, no longer bears traces of its life from 200 years ago.

These eye planes are also found in a group of two figures and a dog that is now in Cambridge,[1] which is usually attributed to the Austral Islands. The skirt-like shapes on the body are similar to the schematic 'bellies' found in figures from the Society Islands, and the chevron shapes (angular geometry) are also known from the supporting pillars and crossbeams of the fighting platform on war canoes from the Society Islands.[2]

1 Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, Cambridge University (D 1914.34).

2 Haddon & Hornell (1937, p 141), quoting Forster.

DOUBLE-HEADED FIGURE

Tahiti, Society Islands, central Polynesia
early 19th century
wood
59 cm

British Museum, London, Oc1955,10.1

This is the only known figure from the Society Islands with two side-by-side heads. They sit on opposite sides of the square body, not so much fighting for space but uncomfortable in each other's presence. One wants to dominate. The other refuses to give in. It is an uneasy compromise.

Regardless of whether it was ever used in a traditional context, this striking figure remains one of the best known works from early nineteenth-century Tahiti.

Most wood figures from Tahiti appear to have been used on Tahitian warships, balanced at the top of the tall extensions that reached for the sky from the upcurved stern of the double-hulled *pahi*. The figures are comparatively light because their maritime life has eroded their soft centres. This figure is relatively unused, although at some stage its left head was broken off then reattached with glue. A thick layer of wax covers the break and the figure smells strongly of wax or oil. After noticing that only one of the four eyes has a pupil, Tara Hiquily, curator at Musée de Tahiti et des îles remarked, 'Perhaps the boat was leaving!'.

Back-to-back double figures resolve the problem of depicting a double being without the visual conflict and feeling of unease that accompanies figures with two heads facing in the same direction. As a consequence, wood figures with two adjacent heads are rare—this is the only such figure known from Tahiti. Three others are known from Rapa Nui.

Most of the known double-headed, back-to-back figures or images from Polynesia were found in the Marquesas Islands, Rapa Nui and Aotearoa New Zealand, with at least one from the Hawaiian archipelago.[1] A group of fly whisk handles with back-to-back double heads have been attributed to Rurutu or Tubua'i in the Austral Islands.

The most common back-to-back double figures in eastern Polynesia are the stone figures known as *tiki* that are found in the Marquesas Islands. They more typically featured two full bodies back-to-back, with a gap or hole at the neck, and were often associated with fishing and the fertility of fish.[2] Other double-headed objects from the Marquesas Islands include stone pounders.

According to British Museum records, Captain Sampson Jervois RN collected this figure in the Society Islands while serving as a first lieutenant on HMS *Dauntless* on the East Indies Station from 1818 to 1823.

1 Bishop Museum, Honolulu, 1976.076.001, found in a lava tube near Honokōhau, North Kona, Big Island of Hawai'i.

2 Babadzan 1993, pp 25–82.

DOUBLE FIGURE

Huahine, Society Islands, central Polynesia
18th century
wood
61 cm
British Museum, London, Oc,TAH.60

This intriguing group of figures is more complex than it first appears. The top two figures have small breasts,[1] no genitalia and the characteristic eye and mouth shape of the large female *tiʻi* figure in this exhibition (p 97). They stand with knees bent almost at right angles, and are connected buttock to buttock; several related figures indicate that this feature was not uncommon.[2]

The support section is more abstract. Two back-to-back figures are shown in profile, each with deeply projecting V-shaped belly, knees and legs. They sit on a box-like platform. In a sense the more naturalistic top figures can be understood as the heads of the support figures below. From another group of figures, the most complete of those known to have survived,[3] it seems that the original support section may have consisted of at least four sets of back-to-back figures, one on top of the other. An illustration of this other more complete figure was first published by William Ellis in 1829[4] as 'idol for a canoe from Huahine'; his is the only source that associates this type of figure with a canoe. John Frederick Miller depicted a similar, or at least related, object in 'Carv'd Ornament from Otaheite', c 1771.[5]

The figure appears to have been carved without metal tools, so it may well be eighteenth century.

1 An examination of the other two known related groups of figures found that breasts were indicated on all the figures in the top group, but genitalia were not depicted.
2 A single figure that is a fragment of a similar object is in the National Museum of Ireland, Dublin, 1885.190. It is thought to have been part of the Cook collection given to Trinity College.
3 British Museum Oc1939,11.1 acquired in 1939, first published by Ellis 1829.
4 Ellis 1829, vol 2, frontispiece, no 6; f.
5 British Library, London Add. MS 15508, f.8. Depicted in Joppien & Smith 1985, vol 1, p 123, fig 1.61.

ti'i, the living stones of Tahiti and Mo'orea

TI'I, THE LIVING STONES OF TAHITI AND MO'OREA

What could be more inert than stone, even volcanic stone?

Yet still today, there are stones that fill the inhabitants of Tahiti and neighbouring Mo'orea with fear. These crude anthropomorphic carvings of volcanic rock and sometimes coral, called *ti'i*, are shrouded in mystery. There are more than 100 in the reserve collection of the Musée de Tahiti et des îles and a few rare examples can still be found in Polynesian homes. Most other ancient Polynesian objects are now in foreign countries.

In the Polynesian islands, the mythical figure of Ti'i, or Tiki, referred to a god and also to the first man who, by mating with earth or sand, gave birth to humanity. It is by no means certain that the generic term *ti'i*, which is assigned to the statues, refers to Ti'i, the first man. Some anthropomorphic statues are identified as *ti'i* even though they are very different from each other. We know that wooden poles many metres tall, planted in the ground and depicting figures one above the other, were known as *ti'i* and served to determine the boundary between clan lands.

There are also finely sculpted wooden statues that belonged to priests–sorcerers. They were stored on a shelf in the *fare iamanaha* (house where the *to'o*, *ti'i* and objects sacred to the *marae* environment were kept). The priest slept beside them and nobody dared to go near his residence. The sound of a shell (*vava*) conveyed the whispers of the spirits that lived in those statues.

Sorcerers were authorised to display their *ti'i* at the time of the great Pa'iatua ceremony that took place on the large *marae*. They had to remain on the periphery of the open-air temple, however, where the *to'o*[1] were stripped of their coconut flock covering, then 'dressed' with new red feathers.

Like the *to'o*, almost all the wooden statues are now in English museums for, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, they were handed over to Protestant missionaries of the London Missionary Society when the islanders converted to Christianity. Very few wooden *ti'i*, perhaps only four, survived in Polynesia. For safekeeping they were placed in a cavity in a Mo'orea cliff where the bones and the most precious possessions of the high-ranking deceased were buried. These four *ti'i* are made of *pua* wood (*Fagraea berteroana*), which is in keeping with the information passed on by the last *tahua* (priests, bearers of knowledge) detailing the carving of the *ti'i* from a branch of a sacred *pua* growing within the *marae* area.

The stone or coral statues do not appear to have had the same status as those made of wood. They have been discovered stuck into corners of the walls surrounding small family *marae*, facing stones used as back rests, in former plantations, or simply buried. Some of these *ti'i* have remained where they were found, but more often they have been given to the Papeete Museum (created in 1917) or its 1977 replacement, the Musée de Tahiti et des îles. Today more than 100 *ti'i* have been given to these collections, mostly by the Polynesians who owned them or discovered them on their land. Some were found still in position on the *marae*, in particular in the Papenoo, Tautira and Papetoai valleys.

The functions of the stone and coral *ti'i* remain vague. Their presence in plantations confirms a similar use to that of the *mauri* of the New Zealand Maori. These anthropo-zoomorphic stones were made responsible for promoting crops and protecting plantations. In less than a square kilometre in the rich lands of the Papara district, farmer J Otcenasek dug up 20 *ti'i*. When placed

in cultivated areas, the *ti'i* were probably used to protect the harvest and ensure an increase in production, thus playing an active role in the ritual control of earth's fertility. Within the family *marae* it is possible that the *ti'i* had a guardianship role as the spirits of deified ancestors.

In Mangareva, the term *ti'i* was also used to identify fine wooden statues. The Fathers of the Picpus order, in particular Honoré Laval, gathered precise information about the nature of the *ti'i*. Priests of the sorcerer–soothsayer caste, mediums between the spirits of the ancestors and the world of humans, said that when a spirit spoke through their mouth during a trance, they carved a wooden image into which the spirit became imbedded.

Ancient Tahiti, a reference book for understanding the transmission of the last *tahua*'s knowledge, focuses solely on the destructive aspect of the *ti'i*, which was activated by the *oromatua*, wandering spirits who are directed by the sorcerers to use painful methods to kill their enemies or their sponsors' enemies.

Some of the *ti'i* appear to have been either mutilated or smashed, probably as a result of the local people's conversion to Western religion. Missionaries introduced the first pyres, such as that of Papetoai in Mo'orea, in 1813 at which time Pati'i, a Polynesian priest who had recently converted to Christianity, burned a 'pagan' effigy to prove it did not, as was the belief, have the power to kill those who offended the *ti'i*. It seems this period saw the start of the practice of destroying the statues by fire, or by mutilating them with a sledgehammer or axe. Many of the *ti'i* in our collection bear the marks of these attacks, having been decapitated, disfigured or dismembered.

Occasionally *ti'i* are destroyed in this way today, particularly when people are convinced that the objects have caused their misfortune. Two of the *ti'i* in our collections, one from the Tahitian district of Tautira and the other from Paea, bear burn marks from an attempt to destroy them by fire. There are many testimonies to such practices. Visitors to the Museum's exhibition rooms have complained of not feeling well after visiting the *ti'i* displays.

In the past, the *tahua* used to bury ineffective *ti'i* head down, in the direction of Te Po, the world in which spirits dwell. This information is confirmed by the many *ti'i* that have been discovered by people digging their land. They hasten to donate their finds to the Museum as, apart from a few rare collectors, Polynesians abhor the idea of keeping these stone or coral images. 'This stone is alive' are the words most often spoken about the *ti'i*.

In 2012 a European donor returned a coral *ti'i* to Polynesia. It had been illegally collected on a *marae* in Mo'orea, illegally removed from Polynesia, and sold in France. The buyer was so perturbed by the presence of the *ti'i*, however, that he returned it to the dealer. The dealer, in the meantime, had learned the history of the *ti'i*, and returned it to the Polynesians.

The ancient Polynesians' form of worship ended two centuries ago. With the exception of a few examples exhibited in our permanent exhibition rooms, the *ti'i* are today arranged, ten or so at a time, on the many shelves in the storage rooms of the Musée de Tahiti et des îles. The Museum was recently renamed Te Fare Iamanaha, then Te Fare Manaha, which was the former name of the house in which the *ti'i* and the sacred objects were kept. Marker, land boundary, object of worship, protector image, fertility stone, witchcraft instrument, the *ti'i* to this day remain an enigma, but in the Polynesian mind, they are alive.

Tara Hiquily, Collection Manager—Polynesian artefacts collections, Musée de Tahiti et des îles—Te Fare Manaha

1 Symbolic reliquary of the guardian gods made up of an ironwood core fitted tightly into a plaited covering of coconut flock to which red feathers were tied.

DÉMON

Tahiti, Society Islands, central Polynesia
18th century or earlier
stone (red volcanic tuff)
56 cm

Musée de Tahiti et des îles—Te Fare Manaha, Puna'auia, Tahiti, 83.10.01

This unique stone *ti'i* was found near the mouth of the Vaitepiha River at Tautira, on the south-east coast of Tahiti. With his reddened lips and mysterious smile, this *ti'i* has a profound presence. He is the primary symbol of the Musée de Tahiti et des îles, and is the most noticeable figure in the permanent display of stone *tiki* figures from French Polynesia. Even in photographs, he is a striking figure of immense charisma. His presence is unique.

INSTRUMENT FOR ASSISTING CROP FERTILITY

Tahiti, Society Islands, central Polynesia
Collected during the first voyage of Captain James Cook, 1768–1771
wood, sennit (coconut fibre)
55.9 cm

David King, San Francisco

At first glance this mysterious work resembles a *to'o*, especially in the finely woven sennit cover that most likely held red feathers when the *to'o* was activated. Most *to'o*, however, have the woven sennit cover as their primary feature, but in this case, the wood shaft or axis dominates. The shaft is carved into a vulva at one end and a flat blade at the other.

It was collected during the first voyage of Captain James Cook (1768–1772), during which he observed the transit of Venus in Tahiti and searched for a southern continent. The botanist Joseph Banks accompanied Cook on the voyage and described the object as a 'Spade from Otaheite'.

Although an auction house and others have speculated that this work was associated with the *atua* 'Oro, there is no evidence for this assertion. Banks was painstakingly accurate in his botanical descriptions, and there is no reason to doubt his description of this object as a 'spade'. Accepting Banks's description is key to understanding this and a number of other mysterious objects from central Polynesia.

With its vulva and covering of sennit and red feathers, this is no ordinary spade. It must have been used in ritual context to 'activate' a garden, to make it fertile, or to ensure the fertility of a crop. The blade, or penis end of the instrument, inserted into the earth of the garden, then activated by an *atua* through the red feathers and sennit, would be understood to fertilise the soil and enable the plants to grow.

Detail from John Frederick Miller's *Two spades from Otaheite (Tahiti)*, New Zealand 1769
Drawings illustrative of Captain Cook's First Voyage, 1768–71, British Library

The family idols of Pomare from *Missionary sketches*, no. III
(2nd ed, August 1820, London Missionary Society)

TO'O

Tahiti, Society Islands, central Polynesia
early 19th century
wood, sennit
62.1 cm

British Museum, London, Oc1981,Q.1551

A *to'o* is a mysterious, elusive object. It is like a container, with an interior containing a small piece of wood, the remnants of a previous *to'o* cover, or even a number of human teeth; the exterior is made from sennit—braided coconut husk fibre—that has been finely woven into a tapered cylinder. Sometimes, as with this *to'o*, human attributes such as eyes and a nose are sketched in sennit and attached to the main body. Red, black or yellow feathers were attached to the outer covering during the *pa'iatua* ritual. A group of three *to'o* that were still covered with feathers was found in a burial niche in a wall of the Orofere Valley, Tahiti, wrapped in pandanus leaves.[1] Tautain wrote about Etua Vahi, the wrapped gods of the Marquesas Islands, which were a bundle of three pieces of raw wood wrapped into one package with pieces of tapa that were kept on all the sacred enclosures (*me'ae*) on the Marquesas Islands. When the priest (*ta'ua*) died, the Etua Vahi from his *me'ae* were buried with him.[2]

Others have written extensively about *to'o*, clarifying much about their physical characteristics and suggesting that the short pieces of braided or twisted strips of sennit in the *to'o* are objectified prayers: 'the sennit contains the entangled prayers that make the *to'o* divine'.[3] Some say the wrapping is the important part; and that the core of wood, fibre or teeth is incidental. Others disagree.

At the time of initial contact with the West, the *to'o* were the most sacred religious effigies in Tahiti and the Society Islands. Many *to'o* contained human teeth, which might have carried with them the *mana* of the person (an ancestor) who originally possessed them. That *mana* stayed active while the teeth were inside the *to'o*. *To'o* are associated with the *atua* 'Oro, protector of the island of Raiatea, and are said to 'represent' this *atua*.

Pomare, the second king of Tahiti, sent a group of seven wrapped 'family idols of Pomare', including this *to'o*, together with its name, to the missionaries at Eimeo, either to be burnt, or as happened, sent to the London Missionary Society (LMS). This act was a mark of his conversion to Christianity. The group was carefully drawn and published in the journal *Missionary sketches* in October 1818, and again in *South Sea islander* 1820.

In the LMS museum catalogue[4] it is labelled '2. TERIAPATURA, son of the great God Oro, and national protector of Tahiti, Raiatea, Huahine, Tahaa, Borabora, and Marua'. There are now multiple versions of this name that have been published, including Te Riapatua, Te Ariapatura, Teariapatura, Teriiapotuura, Te Arii-apa-Tura.

This is the only known and named *to'o* with a direct link to the *atua* 'Oro through the *atua*'s son Teriapatura.

Of the 50 or so known *to'o*, three have names of *atua* (Teriapatura, Temeharo, and Tiipa). Three are *oramatua*, which represent the spirits of deceased relations. The remaining *to'o* have been almost invariably attributed to "Oro, war god', but these attributions are not based on documentation that is directly linked to the *to'o*'s existence in the Society Islands.

1 Kaeppler 2007, pp 105–08.
2 Tautain 1898, p 26.
3 Kaeppler 2007, p 108.
4 Reproduced in King 2011, p 195.

FOUR-LEGGED GOD HOUSE (*FARE-NA-ATUA*)

Tahiti, Society Islands, central Polynesia
early 19th century
wood, sennit (coconut fibre)
87.4 cm

British Museum, London, Oc,LMS.120

This unassuming, turtle-shaped god house is a rare survivor of the iconoclasm that swept Tahiti after its people accepted Christianity. It is the only object of its type to survive (assuming there were others like it). Known as a *fare-na-atua* (house belonging to an *atua*), it was kept in a cave in the mountains, together with an idol. A contemporary description of them as being of 'great antiquity' elaborated on the idol as 'a female fiend, hideously misshapen, to mimic humanity. Her name was Tii Vahine, and we were told that she had slain her thousands, having been held in the highest veneration and worshipped from time immemorial'[1]. Both Ti'i Vahine (literally 'female image') and her god house were bought by the missionary George Bennet on 1 October 1823, at the market at Papara in south-western Tahiti, where they were sold, not for their value, but for their curiosity.

We do not know what happened to the Ti'i Vahine figure. An 'idol' named 'Tii Vahine—a Tahitian goddess' was recorded as no 39 in the catalogue of the Missionary Museum,[2] accessioned into the British Museum's collection and is now known as Oc,LMS.98. This record was published in 1818,[3] five years before the figure was meant to have been collected, so we can only conclude,[4] that an element of randomness has entered the system. It is possible that names were switched or misplaced, and the real Ti'i Vahine slipped away. She may have been burnt in Tahiti, or if she survived and came to England, she may be lying quietly and anonymously in a museum collection.

The description 'hideously misshapen' is flavoured by a combination of evangelical zeal and lack of familiarity with the art traditions of central Polynesia. Early nineteenth-century missionaries were not known for their appreciation of the artistic merits of the works that they understood as the enemy. But without a better description we are at a loss as to the occupant of this god house. It has been noted, however, that because a *to'o* would easily fit in the god house's cylindrical container, it is possible that this was a *fare atua* (god house) for a *to'o*.[5] However, *to'o*, by their very nature, are distinctive and have not been referred to elsewhere as 'hideously misshapen'. So we must return to the sad fact that Ti'i Vahine was the occupant of the god house when it was bought by Bennet, and she is now lost to our sight.

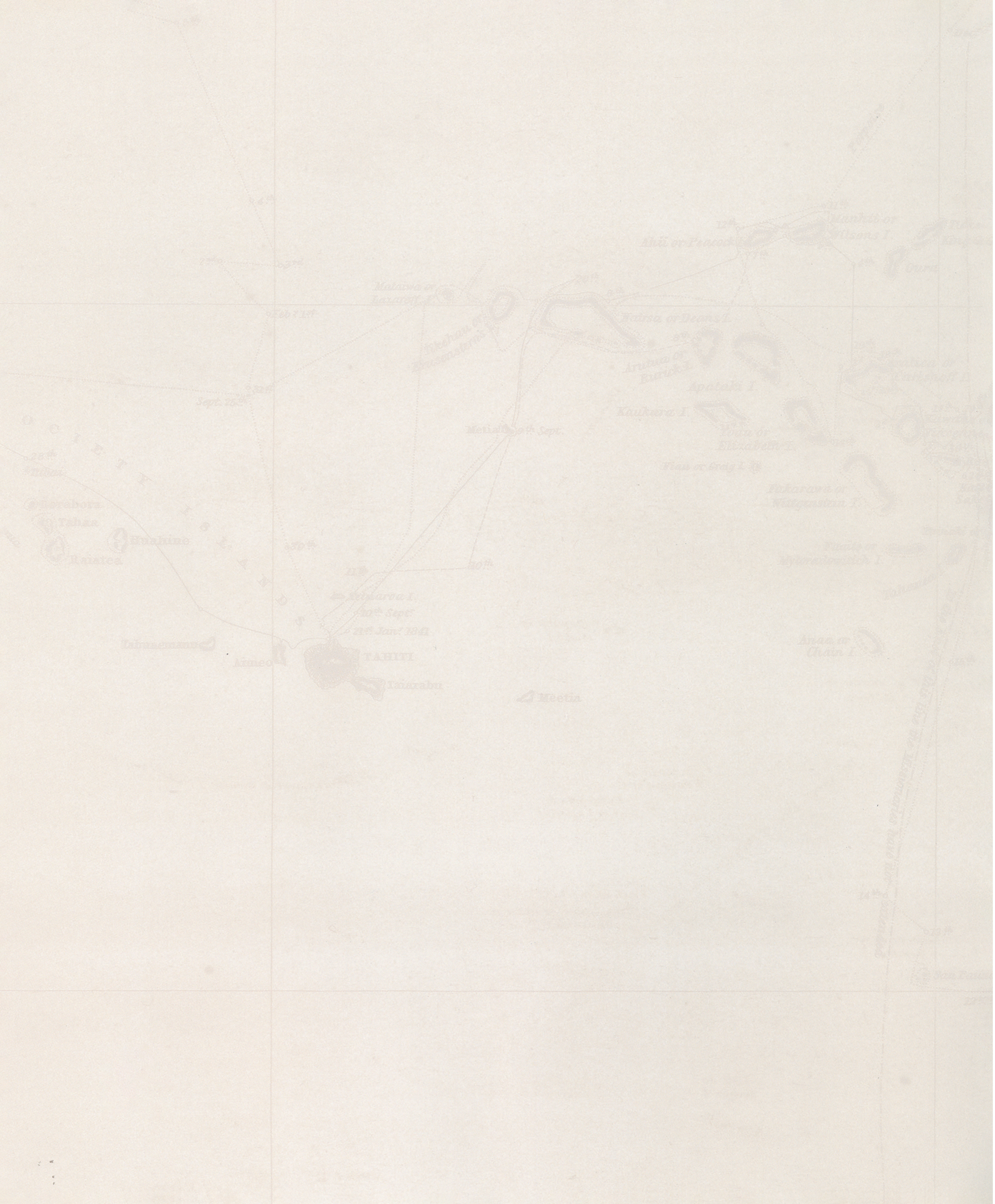
The god house was carved from a solid piece of wood.[6] Its central focus is a closed cylinder sheltered by a roof and supported by four animal-like legs. Four small lugs at the open end of the cylinder indicate it could have been closed and secured. The original cover or door is now lost.

Underneath the cylinder, in the middle and toward the back of the figure, is a large hatch. It is secured to the cylinder by sennit cord, not exactly in line with the body of the cylinder, but with the front of the hatch at the right side of the object, rather than aligned with the back of the hatch. The precise fit between the hatch and the cylinder seems watertight, and the attachment may have been permanent.[7] The hatch appears to be more a repair than an access point, in excavating the cylinder the artist may have found a weakness in the wood, or accidently broke through the body, then repaired his mistake.

It is possible that this god house was once used on a large *va'a ti'i* (sacred canoe) and decorated with feathers, although it is not clear how the feathers were attached. Perhaps they were placed inside the cylinder with Ti'i Vahine and the door closed. William Ellis noted:

> The vaatii, or sacred canoe, was always strong and large, more highly ornamented with carving and feathers than any of the others. Small houses were erected in each, and the image of the god, sometimes in the shape of a large bird, at other times resembling a hollow cylinder ornamented with various coloured feathers, was kept in these houses. Here the prayers were frequently preferred, and the sacrifices offered.[8]

1 Montgomery 1832, vol 2, p 58.
2 King 2011, p 197.
3 Illustrated as no 8 'a family *tii*' in the illustration of the family idols of Pomare in *Missionary Sketches*, 1818.
4 Hooper 2005; Hooper 2006, p 176.
5 Kaeppler 2007, p 102; Hooper 2005, p 97.
6 As mentioned in the description in Montgomery, and later in Hooper 2005, p 97.
7 Hooper 2005, p 97.
8 Ellis 1829, vol 1, pp 168–69.


TAHITI
Meetia

Tuamotu Archipelago

TUAMOTU ARCHIPELAGO

The Tuamotu (Paumotu) Archipelago comprises 78 low-lying atolls situated in a vast ocean east of Tahiti.

Some of the atolls are huge, with hundreds of kilometres of coastline. Rangiroa, for example, has a 200-kilometre coastline and encloses a massive lagoon of 1762 square kilometres. Tematangi, by contrast, is just 12 kilometres from one end to the other.

Most atolls are less than ten metres above high-water mark and have no running water, although in the past people collected rainwater and used coconuts for both water and food.

From linguistic evidence it is clear that many small groups of people have drifted in and populated various parts of the archipelago over a long period, but the low-lying sandy nature of these atolls has retained little trace of their early habitations. Hurricanes have destroyed most archaeological sites. At least nine dialects of the Pa'umotu (Tuamotuan) language were used. The people are Polynesian in origin, mainly from the nearby Society Islands, but the nature of their island group—in effect a 1500-kilometre-long net—meant they were easily found. People drifting east after surviving a hurricane would be likely to find the archipelago of atolls as did, eventually, the Europeans. These atolls were visited by the Portuguese (1606), Dutch (1616), English (1765), French (1768), Spanish (1774), Germans and Russians (1815). Whalers and pirates also left their impression.

Although the inhabitants lived a precarious existence, they were not helpless. They adapted to atoll life and were known for their beautifully made and durable double canoes in which they could take long voyages. The few surviving smaller canoes were made from small pieces of driftwood sewn together with sennit.

Their cultural centres were their *marae*—their ritual and religious sites. The *marae* was the focus of a village or settlement and the most important place in the life of the Tuamotu. When a man wanted to create a new place for himself and his people, his first act was to establish a *marae*. It was a cleared space with an altar at one end and sometimes partially enclosed with a wall made from coral blocks or sandstone. It was a sacred place for focusing on their origins and ancestors. Communication with their ancestors took place at the *marae* through relics of head and facial hair, and also bones. Art objects were made and used in rituals, but very few have survived.

SACRED CHEST

Tematagi (Tematangi) atoll, Tuamotu Archipelago, central Polynesia
created on Hao atoll before 1785
wood, pandanus leaves, sennit (coconut fibre)
93 cm

Museo Etnologico Vaticano, Città del Vaticano, 100175

This sacred chest, or reliquary, was collected on Tematangi atoll in 1885, when the people converted to Christianity and destroyed all their idols as a sign of their conversion. This was the only survivor.

When it arrived in Rome for the Vatican Exposition of 1925, it was described as a 'Sacred chest containing relics of the elders of Tematangi'. It was said that inside were hair and beard from deceased ancestors wrapped in small packets tied with sennit (coconut fibre), along with shark teeth.[1]

Recently examined documents in the Vatican archives indicate that Father Vincent de Paul Terlyn, one of the priests involved in the conversion of the people of Tematangi to Christianity, recorded the chest as being already more than 100 years old when it was collected, and that it originally came from Hao, an atoll 350 kilometres north of Tematangi. It is likely that when a family group moved from Hao to Tematangi they brought their sacred chest with them. Very few of these reliquaries have survived and only three are known, all of which are said to have come from Hao atoll.

Tematangi was not always occupied. When William Bligh visited the atoll in the *Providence* in 1792 he found it uninhabited. In 1826 Captain Frederick Beechey RN found people living there. Part of the reason for the shifting population could be that Tematangi is a fully enclosed lagoon with no navigable pass. People would not have been able to securely store their canoes because all access faced the open ocean. Hao, by contrast, is a bigger atoll with a navigable passage into the lagoon.

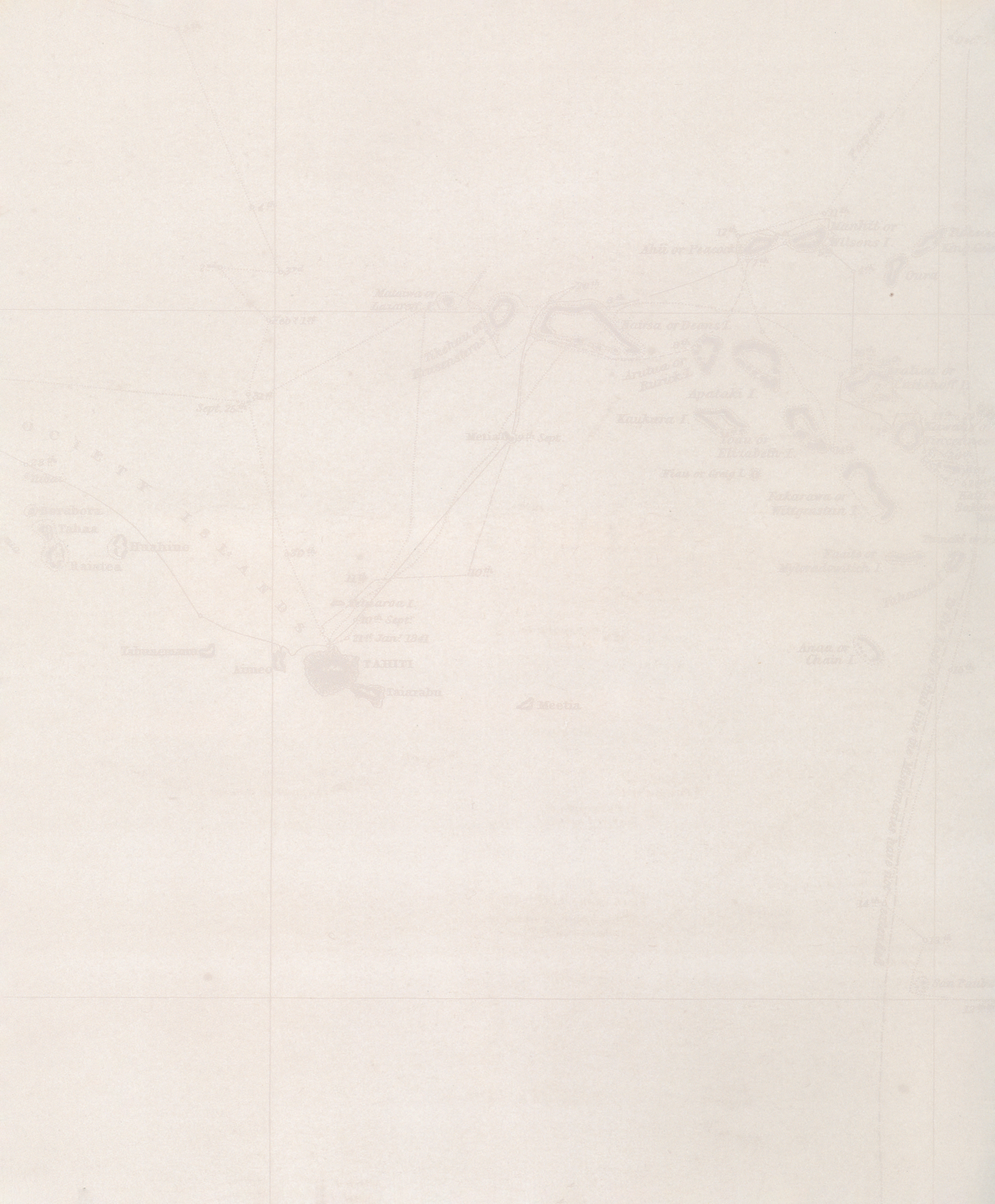
On other atolls in the Tuamotu Archipelago in the early to mid-nineteenth century, ten or 12 god houses were kept in racks on each *marae*, each one containing relics of hair and beard taken from ancestors after they had died. The hair was wrapped in sennit and red feathers. A chief owned the *marae*, and each of these chests was placed there by a leader of one of the family groups that belonged on the atoll.

When a photograph of this sacred chest was shown in 1937 to the older people from Tematangi, they did not know the term *fare tini atua* (god house), which was used on some other atolls. Instead they said it was a *kero* (basket) constructed to receive the *atua*.[2] These *kero* were suspended in the house of the priest on the *marae*. People knelt in front of the *kero* to pray to their ancestors for help, especially in fishing. After a man died, the chest went to his son, who deposited the bones and hair of his father in it. Thus it would pass from generation to generation.

1 The chest was x-rayed in 2011. Five or six fibrous strips, possibly hair, were found, but no teeth. Adrienne Kaeppler (2007) published an analysis of its contents.

2 Emory 1947, pp 27–28.

1833
Au 2153


Manuae or Hull I.
Ahú or Peacock I.
Motutea or Hervey I.
Maria or Bean I.
Aitutaki I.
Kaukura I.
Flau or Greig I.
Rakaroua or Wilkes I.
Mataiva I.
Raiatea
Tahaa
Huahine
Tubuai
Meetia
TAHITI
Taiarabu
Aimeo

Mangareva
MANGAREVA

Mangareva is part of the Gambier Archipelago at the south-eastern end of the Tuamotu Archipelago and one of the few high islands in this part of the world. Pitcairn Island is 530 kilometres to the east and Rapa Nui, an additional 2100 kilometres east of Pitcairn.

It appears that Mangareva was first settled by humans around 900 to 1000 years ago.[1] Linguists and archaeologists believe settlement might have occurred in two waves—the first from the Society Islands (1600 kilometres to the north-west) or perhaps from Ra'ivavae; the second and more recent colonisation was an invasion from Hiva (probably either the Marquesas Islands, or from Taputapuatea in Raiatea, Society Islands). The first European to land on Mangareva and give a good account of the people was Captain Frederick Beechey in HMS *Blossom* in 1825. He saw in the people's behaviour, tattoos and customs, evidence of ancestry from many parts of Polynesia. Despite their isolation, their traditions reveal that in the past the Mangarevan people had visited many lands, including Rurutu in the Austral Islands, Rarotonga in the Cook Islands and Raiatea in the Society Islands. Based on the archaeological record and linguistic evidence, it is currently thought that Rapa Nui was settled by people from Mangareva, who travelled initially to Pitcairn, then on to Rapa Nui. Interactions between Mangareva and Pitcairn continued over 400–500 years.

The population of Mangareva at the beginning of the eighteenth century is estimated to have been about 2000. Beechey estimated a population of 1500 in 1825.[2] Wars generally resulted in the defeated leaving the island by sea to migrate to another home.

The number of *marae* on Mangareva was small, compared to Polynesian islands of similar size. In 1934, 19 villages and the remains of ten *marae* were identified on the five islands of the archipelago. Another five permanent *marae* were known to have existed, but had been destroyed.

Ten of the 15 permanent *marae* were established by the voyager Tupa, who arrived not long after first settlement around 1250 AD. His main *atua* was Tu, although he had many others.

Public *marae* on Mangareva were classed into those made of basalt, which were established and used by the nobles, and the lesser *marae* made from coral and used by the common people. *Tutavake* was a general term for the *marae* dedicated to the *atua* Tu. Ceremonies for Te Agiagi, the war god, were also held in the main public *marae*, unless the war was being waged elsewhere on the island.

A total of 11 wood figures survived the transition to Christianity, which began in 1834 when Protestant missionary George Nobbs instigated the destruction of the first idols by fire. The Picpus Fathers (Roman Catholic priests of the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary) took over the process of conversion and convinced the Mangarevans to burn their images of the god Tu and destroy their *marae*.[3]

Most of the surviving idols were collected by Picpus missionaries and documented by Father Honoré Laval, a missionary with the Picpus mission based at Braine-le-Comte in Belgium. Laval sent to Braine-le-Comte a crate containing many of the final relics of Mangareva's religious system, each numbered in black ink with a corresponding sheet of paper with details of each item. His descriptions included:

1. The god Tu with four legs; he also bore the name of 'Mainaranghi' and was the supreme god of Mangareva.

2. An idol of cord, representing the evil god Ninita.

3. An idol named Rao who was invoked at the planting of turmeric.

4. An idol causing disorder, also invoked at turmeric planting. (No name was given by Father François d'Assise Caret (one of the Picpus missionaries on Mangareva who arrived in 1834 and was very influential in converting the people to Christianity), but in a letter by (or to) Father Hilarion (a Picpus priest based in Paris) it is referred to as Tupo).[4]

5, 6, 8. Three idols of Rongo, who is represented by the rainbow and gave rain to nourish breadfruit trees. No 8 was accompanied by the utensil from which he ate.

7. An instrument of idolatry.

9. A sacred shell.

10. Part of a drum owned by the royal family.

11. A staff of the god Mapito-iti (presumably used by his priest).

This group accounts for six of the 11 surviving idols. Others were collected by French explorer Jules Dumont d'Urville in 1838, and before 1837 by the trader Captain Henry who was operating between Mangareva and Tahiti in the early nineteenth century.

The most curious fact about the surviving idols is that they did not come from the large, permanent *marae* that was owned by the nobles. Information collected by Laval indicates that a god house was built to receive the god, but makes no mention of a god image.

Lieutenant Belcher, sailing with Beechey, described the contents of a house on nearby Taravai Island:

> A hut, about twenty feet in length by ten wide and seven high, with a thatched roof, of which the eaves were three feet from the ground, contained the deity. There were only two apertures, about two feet six inches square, furnished with thatched shutters. In front of the building, a space about twenty feet square was paved with hewn coral slabs, with curbstones at the edges, as neatly fitted as the pavement in England. Along the whole length of the interior of the hut was a trough elevated about three feet from the ground; in the centre of which was an idol three feet high, neatly carved and polished; the eyebrows were sculptured, but not the eyes; and from the manner in which the muscles were defined it was evident that these people were not regardless of the anatomy of the figure. It was placed in an upright position on the trough or manger, and fastened by the extremities to the side of the hut: the head was bound with a piece of white cloth, as were also the loins, and those parts which the natives themselves never conceal, the aged excepted. In the trough beneath the image were several paddles, mats, coils of line, and cloth, offerings which had been made to the deity; and at his feet was placed a calabash, which the natives said contained water, 'avy'. On each side of the image was a stand, having three carved arms, to the hands of which several articles were suspended, such as carved cocoa-nut shells, and pieces of bamboo, perhaps musical instruments.[5]

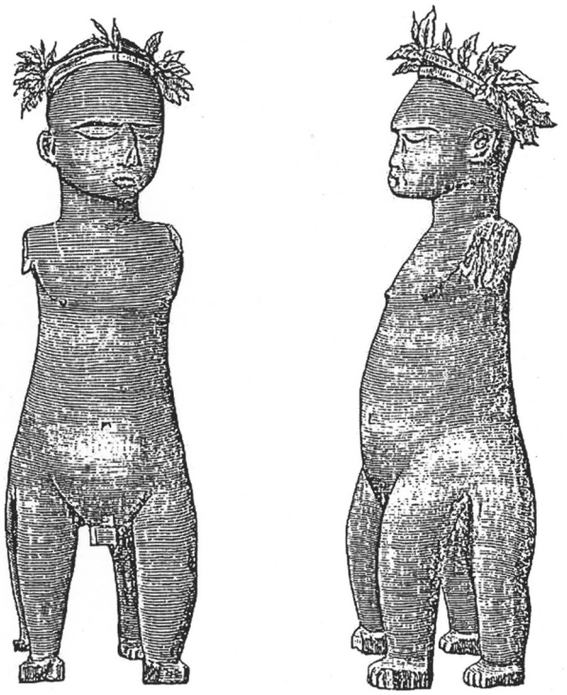
Jacques Antoine Moerenhout, the Franco-Belgian diplomat, explorer and ethnologist, visited Mangareva in 1834 and saw a related place while walking through a different village. The typical houses were so small that they could only be used for shelter and rest. From the style of this special building and the small wooden altars placed on the pavement in front of it, he understood it to be a *marae*. The altars were topped with pieces of coral arranged as a basket that contained fish and other edible things. At one end stood an image about three feet tall, which he said was well sculpted and correctly proportioned, except that the arms were too thin. The local people told him it was a *ti* (*tiki*), a secondary deity, placed there to mark the boundaries of the sacred place.[6]

It is likely that most and possibly all the art works were kept in family *marae*, such as those encountered by Belcher and Moerenhout. This is where idols, such as those for Tu and Rao, were housed and daily offerings made.[7] The big public *marae* were places of public performance, for theatre, for priests to enact the rites of *taboo* and sacredness; the sculptures, the art works, were kept at home.

1 Conte & Kirch 2004.
2 Beechey 1832, pp 126–27.
3 Hiroa 1938, p 99.
4 ibid., p 403.
5 Beechey 1832, pp 112–13.
6 Moerenhout 1837, pp 97–98.
7 Hiroa 1938, p 456.

TU (MAINARAGI)

Mangareva, Gambier Archipelago, central Polynesia
created before 1834
wood
112 cm
Museo Etnologico Vaticano, Città del Vaticano, 100189



IDOLO DELLE ISOLE GAMBIER.

Engraving from 'Ethnographic Collection of the Borgia Museum' 1886, by Angelo Colini, Museo Etnologico Vaticano

This is the only image of Tu as a four-legged human *atua*.

He is a complex being. His presence is felt by everyone who enters the room and it is clear that he is more than just a piece of carved wood, battered by time and the world.

I first saw Tu in public in the De Young Museum in San Francisco, standing in his glass case with crowds thronging around him, attracted by his presence. From a distance they could see his height, his eyebrows slanted to the right, giving the impression he is tilting or leaning, almost as if he were at sea. Up close, his eyes, or eye planes, are visible, looking into another world, somewhere over the heads of his audience.

People look from his face to his body, fascinated by his four legs, which make them realise he is more than a man. His nose is broken and his ears give the impression they are pinned back, flat against his head. His mouth protrudes, almost as though he is speaking, and is a shallow oval, with no teeth. Both his arms are gone, torn off at the shoulders, leaving his nipples exposed. 'No. 1' is written on his middle and a distinctive rectangular hole is where his navel could be. Between his legs hang the remnants of his masculinity, lost before he reached Rome.

Made from a single block of wood, this sculpture was probably created as a vehicle or house for Tu, the chief deity of the island of Mangareva and guarantor of the main source of the islanders' livelihood—the breadfruit tree. With limited land for cultivation, there was an ever-present need for food.

Catholic missionaries of the Picpus order (Congregation of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary) arrived in the Gambier Archipelago in 1834. A letter in the Picpus archives from Father François Caret, dated 20 April 1836, lists 11 objects that were sent to Europe in 1836.

First on the list, Tu, was sent to the Vatican on 13 December 1837 as a gift to Pope Gregory XVI and placed in the Borgiano Museum. Angelo Colini's 1886 catalogue of the works in the museum notes the feathers around Tu's head, but 'only a few of them remain; the rest were destroyed by worms'.[1]

The French text on a card attached to Tu's chest reads:

> The god Tu, called *Mainaragi*, (heavenly light) because light was one of his attributes, enjoyed a certain supremacy among the numerous other gods and was regarded as the one who provided nourishment for people. He was therefore offered many sacrifices to ensure his fertilisation of the trees on which the islanders depended for food, namely the breadfruit.

Tu was the firstborn son of creation ancestors Tagaroa (Tangaroa) and Haumea and the principal functioning god on Mangareva.[2] Rituals were conducted on permanent *maraes* made of basalt and his priests came from noble families. The *marae uaikai* breadfruit ceremony and accompanying feast lasted at least five days and was the most important ritual for the priests. During this ritual Tu was brought to the *marae* to promote an abundant crop.[3]

Imbued with energy, Tu had various forms and names and was represented in natural phenomena by comets.[4] 'The fire that flies through the sky with a sudden report … that thing was Tu.' In the breadfruit ceremony, Tu entered 'his house on the marae as a flash of lightning or a bird'.[5]

1 Colini 1889, pp 922–23, trans. from eighteenth-century Italian.
2 Hiroa 1938, p 422.
3 ibid., p 433.
4 ibid., p 459.
5 ibid., p 460.

RAO

Mangareva, Gambier Archipelago, central Polynesia
created before 1834
wood
106 cm

Musée du Quai Branly, Paris, 72.53.287

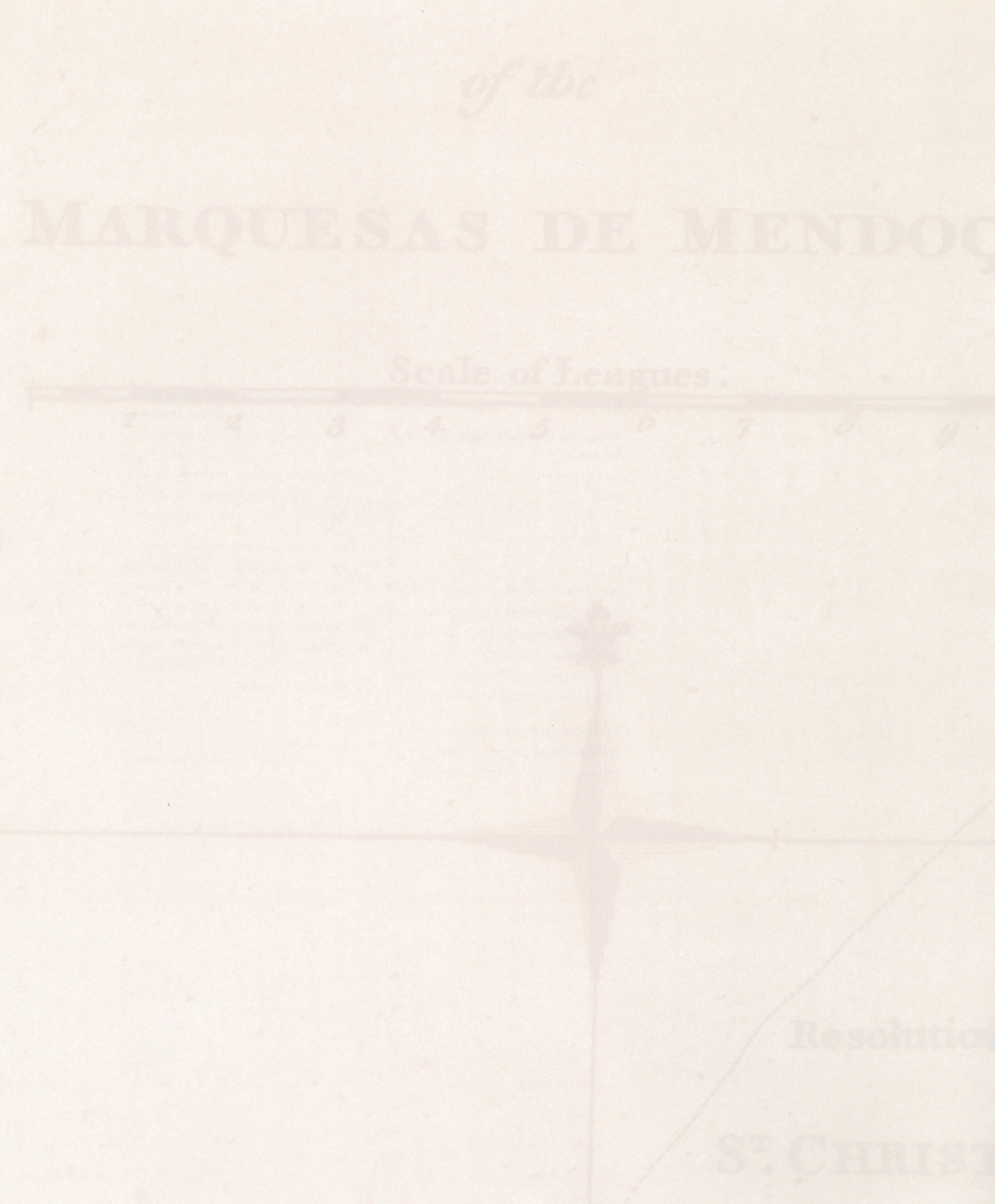
One of the imajor cons of Polynesian art, this figure is associated with the great four-legged figure representing the *atua* Tu (p 121). Both are unique creations, probably by different artists, and both come from a population of around 1500 people on the island of Mangareva.

Rao was one of five *atua* associated with turmeric. The *atua* Rogo, Meihara-iti and Ragahau were used for protection.[1]

Rao and Tupo were invoked during planting. Priests were involved in both the ceremonies and the physical work of grating the turmeric. During the entire process of digging, preparing and cooking the crop, the workers and the priests spent the nights singing songs in honour of the *atua*. Chastity was observed by all.

The wood figures of Mangareva were not used on the public *marae*, but seem to have been kept on small family *marae* in the villages.[2] The sublimely beautiful sculpture of Rao would have been kept in a private place and offerings of food were made to him daily. This figure is testament to the exceptional artistic ability of the people of Mangareva.

1 Hiroa 1938, p 214.
2 Belcher in Beechey 1832, pp 112–13; Moerenhout 1837, pp 97–98.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MARQUESAS DE MENDOC
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Marquesas Islands

MARQUESAS ISLANDS

The Marquesas Islands are a scattered group of ten volcanic islands with few beaches, but wonderfully fertile soil in many of the valleys. Traditionally, each island has been a little independent of the others, and a little different. Sometimes the language has varied, sometimes it is more an emphasis on the quality and size of the dance ground than that on other islands. Together they were one people, but divided by island, by valley, and by war.

There is disagreement over when people first came to the Marquesas Islands, some say more than 2000 years ago, others say 1700 years or less.[1] Gattanewa, a tribal chief in the early nineteenth century, could trace his ancestors back 88 generations (about 1600 years ago from today) to the period when the island was first populated.[2] People came from Samoa, Rarotonga, the Society Islands, and many other places in central and western Polynesia.[3] They probably arrived in small groups, established a foothold and built up a settlement, working out a relationship with the people who were there before.

It is clear they were people of exceptional ability, builders and warriors. They left behind dozens, perhaps hundreds of monuments, including large elevated buildings and plazas.[4] Some were made of heavy slabs of basalt quarried from the beach and carried inland. The slabs, two metres long and one metre on each side, were joined in a perfect fit without the use of metal tools and machinery. The major tools on the Marquesas were the strength, organisation and willpower of the people. Nothing was too hard.

By the early nineteenth century there were perhaps 43,000 people[5] in the island group; strong, healthy, muscular and beautiful. Their chiefs were leaders of a clan, perhaps all the people in a small valley. A king was recognised, but did not hold great power. Warfare was a constant, but moderated by taboo. Wars often involved sacking temples and bearing away all the images. The men usually shaved off their beards except for a tuft of hair upon the chin, and their head was also shorn, apart from two tufts which grew like horns.[6] The women were described as stunningly beautiful.

Atua were everywhere, in every sigh, in every movement. The rustle of the coconut fronds was the sound of a passing *atua*. When aristocrats died they became an *atua*. Some people were *atua* when they were still alive.[7] In the early nineteenth century, Europeans were considered to be *atua*.[8] *Atua* varied in their powers and character; some had dominion over the different elements and their most striking phenomena. There were also *atua* of the mountain, the forest, the seaside and the interior. There were *atua* of peace, war, song, dance, and of all the occupations and amusements of life.[9]

Then there were the *atua* associated with the sacred enclosures. We know of one named Tiki puaikanui (Tiki big ears) who was the *atua* of the primary sacred enclosure on the island of Ua Pou (Uapou, Ua Pu). *Tiki* is a concept prevalent in much of central Polynesia, Aotearoa New Zealand

and the Hawaiian archipelago. On one level it is simple—*tiki* means sculpture, carving, drawing, etching, engraving, tattoo.[10] But it is far more than a generic term for something tangible.

Wood figures were recorded in a number of different contexts by both Russian explorer Captain Adam Johann von Krusenstern, commander of the *Nadezhda* and the *Neva*, who visited Nuku Hiva in 1804, and by American ship chaplain Charles Samuel Stewart in the US *Vincennes*, who also visited Nuku Hiva, in 1829. Their records include:

- Figures on burial *me'ae* for priests, often located on the top of a high hill, in a thick wood.[11] A bier on a stand contained a body with the head visible. In the outer circle were wood figures in human form. Near these figures were pillars wrapped in coconut leaves and a white, cotton-like material. Near the *me'ae* was a priest's house.[12]
- Figures in *me'ae* located in inhabited valleys.[13]
- A 'large log carved into a rude image' was observed reclining against a *taboo* house, surrounded with fragments of coconut, breadfruit and other articles.[14]
- A *taboo* house, against which three huge wooden images were placed, two facing inward towards the thatch, and one facing outward.[15] This form of temple containing three figures—two facing each other, the third in the middle facing out—is mentioned a number of times by Stewart, and seems to have been the most common type of temple.
- Wood figures with a 'janus bifrons' (head with two faces, back to back) seem to have been rare. Stewart recorded only one.[16]
- A 'rude image of a god was suspended in a reclining posture' on the stern of war canoes.[17]
- An image or images were erected on all *tokai*—places sacred to the memory of women who died in childbirth.[18]
- A single image on the platform of the sacred place beside the sea that each community had for its fishermen. Fish and pigs' heads were offered to ensure success in the fishing.[19]
- A 'neatly wrought image of a god of war', carried on a canoe when expecting a sea fight.[20]

Many of the wood figures used on *me'ae* in the Marquesas Islands appear to have been symbols of ancestors rather than a direct link to an ancestor.

Sacred enclosures in the Marquesas Islands were known as *me'ae* in the southern islands, and *ahu* in Nuku Hiva and Ua Pou. Tribal deities were nearly all deified chiefs or priests and no sacred places seem to have been built in honour of the creation gods or for the great deities of Polynesian mythology.[21]

Western contact with the Marquesas Islands is known to have begun in 1595, when the Spanish navigator Alvaro de Mendaña visited the southern group. When his four ships left, two weeks later, at least 100 Marquesans were dead. He named the island group after the wife of the viceroy of Peru, García Hurtado de Mendoza, 5th Marquis of Cañete.

In 1774, 180 years after de Mendaña, Captain James Cook found the southern group. In 1791 the American trader Joseph Ingraham sighted the northern islands but did not land. The following year the Englishman Richard Hergest, sailing on the *Daedalus* with astronomer William Gooch, landed on Nuku Hiva and visited four of the main valleys.

The people of the Marquesas were magnificent navigators and, around 800 years ago, they reached Aotearoa New Zealand to the south-west and the Hawaiian archipelago to the north. Their influence was strong in Rapa Nui, and on islands closer to the archipelago. By the late-eighteenth century, however, they had lost the knowledge and ability to build large, sea-going vessels.[22]

1 Suggs (1961) proposed first settlement on the Marquesas Islands at around 2160 years ago (150 BC). Subsequent re-evaluation by Spriggs and Anderson (1993) and others revised first settlement to between 300–600 AD. See Allen 2004 for a summary of the various arguments and positions. Latest revised dates are 1000–1100 AD (Spriggs 2014 pers comm).

2 Porter 1815, p 34.

3 The Marquesas Islands are 500 kilometres north-east of the nearest atoll in the Tuamotu Archipelago, and 1350 kilometres north-east of Tahiti.

4 See Linton 1925 and Suggs 1961.

5 Porter (1815, p 35) estimated 19,200 warriors on Nuku Hiva. Krusenstern reckoned that for every warrior there were three times the number of women, children, and old people (1813, p 177). Allen 2004 refers to Rallu (1990, p 49) for the Marquesan population size of 43,000 at around this time.

6 Krusenstern 1813, p 158.

7 ibid., p 126, 169.

8 ibid., p 171.

9 Stewart 1831, p 267. Stewart was a chaplain in the US navy.

10 Tautain 1897, p 27.

11 Stewart 1831, pp 331–32.

12 Krusenstern 1813, p 127; also Stewart 1831, p 292.

13 Stewart (1831, p 239), recorded a *me'ae*, located amongst other dwellings, that had been sacked during a war within the previous year, left in ruin and the idols were not replaced.

14 Stewart 1831, pp 283–84.

15 ibid., p 286.

16 ibid., p 321.

17 ibid., pp 244–55.

18 Linton 1925, pp 40–41.

19 ibid., p 41.

20 Stewart (1831, p 282) spotted this 'neatly wrought image of a god of war', along with two or three large temple drums, a war conch adorned with tufts of human hair, spears, battles axes, a stone adze and other utensils and ornaments in the house of an old *taua* (priest).

21 Linton 1925, p 33.

22 Langsdorff 1817, p 154.

HEAD FROM A FEAST BOWL

Nuku Hiva, Marquesas Islands, central Polynesia
before 1848
wood (*Calophyllum inophyllum*, Tahitian tamanu)
24 cm
Musée de la Castre, Cannes, 2011.0.456

Head from a feast bowl Museo Etnologico Vaticano, AU 925

This head is a fine illustration of the dominant art style of the early to mid-nineteenth-century Marquesas Islands. It has the characteristic large round eyes with a faint horizontal fold or ridge bisecting the eye and extending to the ear. The head also features glyphs on both sides of the mouth.

Although recorded as an 'ornament from the prow of a canoe' by Edmond de Ginoux de La Coche, the man who brought it from the Marquesas Islands between 1843 and 1848, there are no known illustrations of Marquesan canoes with this type of prow. It has been suggested that it originated as part of a feast bowl,[1] similar to the two-metre-long bowl that is now in Berlin.[2]

One other head, in the Museo Etnologico Vaticano,[3] is related to this one. The two heads are similar in size and composition, and both appear to have originated as part of much larger objects. Their pre-museum lives were different, however, as the head collected by de Ginoux has a beautiful patina and the timber looks healthy and well nourished, quite possibly the result of 150 years spent in private European hands, while the head that found its way into the Museo Etnologico Vaticano shows definite signs of weathering on the tops of the crown and ears. The section under the ears, on the deck behind the mouth, is comparatively unweathered and there are signs of patination on the deck edge from being handled or brushed against over a long period of time. This patination rules out the head having been in an ossuary, and suggests that it was from either a canoe or a feast bowl.

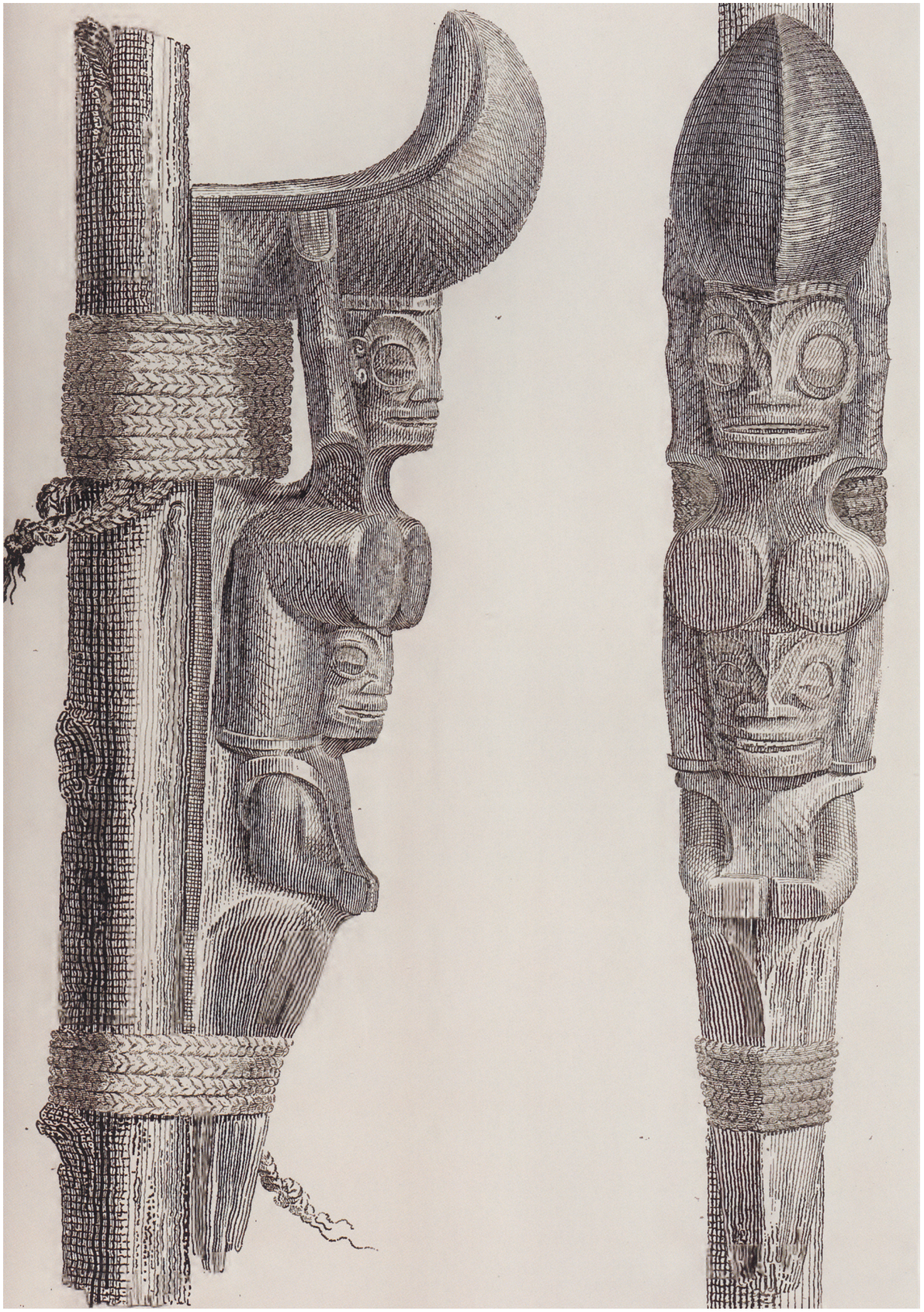
A characteristic that these two share with heads found on smaller, covered bowls is the distinctive 'egg-shape' of the figures in profile. Several feast bowls with finials from the early to mid-nineteenth century in the Marquesas Islands have survived. One bowl with a cover, now in the Musée du Quai Branly,[4] features two distinctly different heads, both of which are finials on either side of the bowl. The first is similar in sculptural style to the two heads under discussion, while the other is carved in the style more usually associated with one of the two primary styles of canoe prow finials. The finial head of this bowl is much smaller (around five centimetres high) than the two heads, which are more than four times as large.

Another bowl with a head related to the one under discussion and probably to the one in Quai Branly is in Berlin's Ethnologisches Museum.[5] The Berlin bowl is missing its cover and features one raised head as a finial that is less than five centimetres in height.

Five round, lidded bowls resembling seated chickens are located in Cannes,[6] Città del Vaticano,[7] New York,[8] Paris[9] and Wellington.[10] Each features one raised finial head on the body of the bowl, but all are less than five centimetres in height. At least one of these bowls[11] has an image resembling a canoe prow on the lid, at the opposite end of the bowl to the finial head.

It is possible that de Ginoux was correct, and these large heads were used on canoes, but were never sketched or drawn in that position by Western artists. The more likely alternative is that in the late-eighteenth century or early nineteenth century, certain types of feast bowl were much larger than those that survive in museum collections. As the pattern appears to be one finial head on the body of the bowl, it is likely that at least two of these large bowls were in use in this early contact period.

1 Tara Hiquily, curator at the Musée de Tahiti et des îles, pers comm.
2 Illustrated in Karl von den Steinen, *Die Marquesaner und ihre Kunst*, 1928, vol 3, Taf α N no 2, and now in Berlin's Ethnologisches Museum VI 15,868. The bowl was collected from Atuona on Hiva Oa.
3 Museo Etnologico Vaticano, Città del Vaticano, 100198.
4 Musée du Quai Branly, 71.1887.21.14.1–2, donated to the Musée de l'Homme by Roland Bonaparte in 1887.
5 Ethnologisches Museum, Berlin, VI 15857, registered as a kava bowl from the island of Hiva Oa.
6 Musée de la Castre, Cannes, OB 75, collected by Edmond de Ginoux around 1845.
7 Museuo Etnologico Vaticano, Città del Vaticano, 100214.2 (AU 946-A).
8 Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 1986.476.4 a,b, said to have previously been in the collection of the Musée d'Histoire Naturelle, La Rochelle (Douglas Newton's note in the curator's offer of gift report).
9 Musée du Quai Branly, Paris, 71.1887.31.13.1-2, donated by Roland Bonaparte in 1887 to the Musée de l'Homme.
10 National Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, OL 193, acquired from Oldman with the notation that it was collected by the Krajevski Expedition.
11 Musée du Quai Branly, Paris, 71.1887.31.13.1–2.



Étienne Marchand *Echasses de Whitaho ou Santa-Christina* plate V from *Voyage autour du monde* (Paris, 1797)

Canoe figures of the Marquesas Islands

CAŇOĚ FIGURĚS OF THE MARQUESAS ISLANDS

At first sight, Marquesas Islands canoe figures depict a smiling man, seated on the deck of a canoe, facing the prow, gliding contentedly, his feet resting on the heads of one or two subordinates.

At least 28 of these figures have survived into the twentieth century. They are said to have been canoe prows or attached to the end of a canoes. None of them, however, show evidence of having been near the sea or immersed in water.[1]

There are no salt crystals in the cracks and there is no weathering from sun and water. Many have selective patinas as a result of handling that has resulted in polishing a raised surface, leaving a valley untouched.

The figures were most likely used in fertility rituals and the renewal of life. Comparisons with related figures from Rarotonga indicate that these figures directly associated with the potent symbol of the 'ancestral penis'. The penis shaft, thrusting forward from under the deck, terminates in a head dominated by a large smile.[2] Markings on at least two such shafts[3] (pp 133, 137) suggest that they were once bound with cord or sennit. When the figure was used in rituals, the shaft was most likely to have been wrapped in sennit and adorned with bright red feathers to attract *atua*.

Such an object, with its penis-prow wrapped in sennit and sparkling red feathers, is likely to have been associated with fertility rather than survival at sea or mere decoration. In fact, the original label of one of these figures in the British Museum reads 'Dieu de la fécunditie, Divinitè Marquesine'.[4]

The shafts of some canoe figures are roughened even though the main figures on the deck are well finished. Perhaps the prow-penis had a similar function to the central shafts of the Rarotongan 'staff gods' and shaft of the Tahitian 'spade' (p 106), which were roughened or left unfinished, then covered with sennit (in Tahiti) or bark cloth (in Rarotonga) to contain or hold red feathers in ritual context.

At least two of the main figures include details, such as specific and detailed neck pendants,[5] which suggests that they are depictions of identifiable ancestors.

Comparison between these Marquesas Islands canoe figures and the singular Rarotongan canoe figure (p 65) indicates that these figures are not solely three-dimensional pictures depicting a man on his ancestral penis or ancestral canoes, but, rather, they were used to entice *atua* to interact with the descendants of that distant ancestor to ensure continued fertility in their lives.

1 Tara Hiquily first drew my attention to the fact that, to his knowledge, none of the depictions of canoes in the Marquesas Islands from the early contact period feature these figures at the prow. Stewart (1831, p 282), however, refers to a 'neatly wrought image of a god of war, carried with them on a canoe when expecting a sea fight', but does not illustrate what he describes.

2 This image was also found on the prow of war canoes measuring 12 metres (Porter 1815, p 17) and six metres (Stewart 1831, p 243).

3 British Museum Oc.1972, these wrapping marks are visible in a photo on the British Museum's website; and Rietberg RPO 202 (p 137) also shows these markings.

4 British Museum's Oc.1972, formerly in the Henry Christy collection and acquired after his death in 1865.

5 British Museum Oc.1972 features a clearly delineated pendant—probably a whale tooth—suspended around its neck; another figure published in Bounoure (1992 p 43), is depicted with a chest pendant possibly similar to one drawn by Charles Chapman in Cook (1777) (see Joppien & Smith 1985, vol 2, p 207, pl 2.105C) and another in Étienne Marchand's journal 1790–1792 (see Marchand & Fleurieu 1798–1800; Notter 1997 p 140, no 126).

CEREMONIAL CANOE FIGURE

Marquesas Islands, central Polynesia
acquired 1921
wood
45 cm

Musée d'ethnographie, Genève, 8937

This beautifully balanced piece, sculpted by an expert, is probably the most complete realisation of the idea behind all the Marquesan ceremonial canoe figures. It is in excellent original condition. Handling has created visible patination on the face at the end of the shaft, the leg-extensions, the main figure's penis, its arms, and on some of the raised facial features.

At one end of the long shaft is a head like that on a canoe prow[1] and at the other, a curving wedge-shaped deck. There are three figures on the deck, but the large primary figure dominates the composition. Its leg-extensions overgrow two, much smaller, figures that face to the sides and which are similar to the solid-looking stone *tiki* found elsewhere in the Marquesas Islands (see p 140).

The main figure appears to be leaning back as a result of the leg extensions connecting it to the smaller figures. These extensions are one of the most mysterious design elements of canoe figures. They are a feature of seven out of the 28 known canoe figures[2] and are clearly part of an original design, for these seven figures appear to have been carved with stone tools. On the least damaged canoe figures, such as this one, the feet of the extensions overgrow the small figures like tree roots obscuring a rock.

The design and placement of the smaller figures is less consistent, with four examples having the two smaller *tiki* figures facing the sides and being either part of the main figure's feet (two instances) or dominated by the main figure (two instances, same artist). Three other works have just one smaller figure that either faces the main figure (one instance), or faces forward (two instances). In another work a small figure perches on the right shoulder of the main figure.

It is likely that the main figure is an ancestor and that the smaller *tiki* figures are the sources of its strength. In all instances the main figure appears to be manipulating or dominating the smaller figures. In five of the seven decipherable images, a foot of the leg-extensions merges with an arm of a smaller figure. This relationship can be read many ways. Perhaps it depicted how a major ancestor controls all his descendants, and that they are dependent upon him.

The point at which the leg extension connects to the main figure's leg is often modelled as the five fingered symbol for an upward-facing hand, although it remains part of the main figure rather than being the arm of a smaller figure. The intent of this symbol is unclear.

The composition of this work centres on the main figure, which almost floats above the deck. His tiny arms with their six fingers rest either side of a raised circle in the centre of his chest, the focus of much of the surface ridging that covers most of his body, but not his head. The ridges closely resemble the tattoo design on the Rarotongan chief Te Po, which was recorded in 1837.[3] It is possible that the design was traditional for Te Po's family, that at some point his ancestral line connected with an ancestral line in the Marquesas Islands, and that Te Po and the man depicted on this canoe figure shared a distant ancestor.

The raised circular section between the hands is visible on all the canoe figures that feature surface ridging on their bodies. It is possible that this is a navel, raised to chest level. The proportions of the figure have been changed

John Williams Jr (print after) **George Baxter** (engraver)
Te Po, a Chief of Rarotonga, wood engraving and etching, printed in colour from multiple plates, 14.2 x 9 cm
Collection: David Shaw King

so that, while the hands are each side of the navel, as is normal for central Polynesian ancestor figures, the region below the navel has been elongated and expanded.

The rear of the figure has equally elongated proportions, with narrow shoulders and comparatively broad buttocks that sport a different, circular ridge-sculpted design, with what looks like an abstract face on the right-hand side.

Viewed from the front, the penis is a highly patinated knob. Halfway between the penis and the navel is a horizontal band with a mysterious small hole just beneath it.

There is another mystery in the glyph found on either side of the mouth, below the large eyes. In figure sculpture, glyphs are often found in this position but never elsewhere on the body. They are also found next to the mouths of figures on stilt steps and of heads on breadfruit pounders, and on the stems of earplugs made from whale ivory. On the small bone figure known as *ivi po'o*, the glyphs are generally seen at the back of the head, and occasionally between the hands on the navel, or beside the mouth. Most conspicuously, they are to be found on *'u'u* clubs, usually just below the central small head.

Given their position on all these types of objects, these glyphs most likely represent images of words or phrases, quite possibly (given their occasional position on the navel in the *ivi po'o*) words from an ancestor.

On top of the figure's head are two small knobs, a feature shared with several other figures. Often the knob is not decorated or finished to any large extent, suggesting that something, perhaps feathers, was attached there.

The sides of the upper chest on this figure form a distinct arc. Several other canoe figures feature a similar distinct arc. Others show a form of shoulder cover.

The figure sits on a wedge-shaped deck with the thin edge facing forwards. The upper surface of the deck has been smoothed so that there are no visible tool marks, and each side of the deck slopes down, as though to repel water. There are two square holes through the deck on either side of the figure. The chopping marks at the back of the deck, clearly not part of the original design, indicate that the canoe figure was part of an unknown larger object.

This was undoubtedly a religious object, in the sense that it was used to interact with an *atua*, and as such it was most likely kept and used in a *marae*. Today we recognise this figure as a significant work of art, as a religious object, and as a key to understanding a vanished world.

1 These heads were used on canoes at the prow, and have also been recorded on a bier *upoko papa* (von den Steinen 1928, vol 3, Taf αY no 6).

2 These seven figures appear to be earlier than most of the others, some of which were probably made for the tourist market.

3 Engraved Baxter and published in Williams 1837. See David King 2011, p 101, fig 101.

CANOE FIGURE

Marquesas Islands, central Polynesia
19th century
wood
29 cm

Rietburg Museum, Zürich, RPO 202

The sculptor of this superb figure thought deeply about the work he was about to create before applying his adze, for it is different in important aspects to other figures of its type. In particular, he has focused on the relationship between the main figure and the smaller figure in front of it, integrating the two in a way that was clearly important to the artist or his aristocratic patron. The head on the end of the shaft, looking back at the two figures, keeps the visual focus on this relationship.

We cannot know all the ramifications of this type of connection, particularly as this work was created in the Marquesas Islands before the use of metal tools, which may date it to before 1595, when Alvaro de Mendaña met the people living on the island of Tahuata in the southern Marquesan Islands and introduced them to the concept of gunfire.

The head at the end of the shaft faces back towards the main figure, its mouth on the shaft, and its nose, eyes and ears on the raised section. There are visible cord and wrapping markings on the shaft that are a result of the resinous substance used to attach the wrapping. The main figure appears to have a shoulder cover, and the arc at the edge of the chest is not as clearly defined as on other related figures.

The single small figure on the deck faces forwards, its arms and upper body subsumed by the leg extensions of the main figure. Surface ridging is another point of continuity between the two figures. The ears on the small figure are single in contrast to the double ears on the larger figure.

The wood is dry, almost powdery in places, which adds to the impression of the figure's age. There is obvious patination on several parts, including the sides of the main figure's head, the head of the small figure, and at points on the main figure's arms. Perhaps there was animal fat on the hands that touched the figure.

CANOE FIGURE

Marquesas Islands, central Polynesia
19th century
wood
48 cm
British Museum, London, Oc,LMS.194

The deep-chested smiling main figure dominates this work. According to the British Museum's notes of 1890, the feather headdress with which it was once decorated has disappeared.

The composition can be be better understood by comparing it with related figures. The main figure sits on a rudimentary platform on the wedge-shaped deck with its feet resting on the heads of the two smaller figures, both of which face outwards. The small figure at the main figure's right side is the more clearly defined of the two. Unusually, the main figure's legs and feet are depicted and there is no merging of the smaller figures with the main figure.

The head at the end of the shaft and the shaft itself are roughly sketched. The shaft is more heavily patinated than the main figure.

The rear of the main deck is missing, and it appears that the entire piece was originally attached to something else. There is no visible weathering, which suggests it was not attached to a canoe. The sides of the deck may have been sawn off and square holes on each side of the deck were used to attach the canoe-figure to something else, or to support a rod that perhaps held feathers.

This piece was purchased by the British Museum from the London Missionary Society in 1911. It is very similar to another canoe figure that was sold in the Hooper sale of 1976[1] and was probably made by the same artist.

1 See Phelps 1976, p 98, pl 47, no 395; p 419. Also Gathercole, Kaeppler, Newton 1979 p 132, fig 2.17.

STONE FIGURE (*TIKI*)

Marquesas Islands, central Polynesia
19th century
stone, volcanic rock
15.1 cm

Musée du Quai Branly, Paris, 71.1887.50.1

One of the strangest things about this stone *tiki* figure is not usually shown in published photographs. The typical image captures the essential elements of this solid figure, with square shoulders, legs like tree trunks, a substantial body, pectorals and belly. He appears big, strong and reliable.

With his big '*tiki* eyes', a jaw-line that is accentuated by a ridge and broad open mouth, the figure epitomises the classic Marquesan stone *tiki* figure. The view from behind, and above, however, reveals that the top of his head has been carefully removed. A metal tool has made a square hole at the top and another at the back of his neck. Was this an attempt to kill the *tiki*, or a clumsy attempt to allow it to be suspended?

Tiki are synonymous with Polynesia but their purpose remains a mystery. Throughout Polynesia the name Tiki refers to the first human, and *tiki* can also mean 'image', but these words do not approach the essence or core of the stone figures that were created throughout central Polynesia, in Ra'ivavae (part of the Austral Islands), Tahiti and especially in the Marquesas Islands, where hundreds and possibly thousands of stone figures were created and used. Their whereabouts is no longer known. Most of the large, two- and three-metre tall figures remain in their valleys, and are now part of French Polynesia's national heritage. But the hundreds of smaller stone figures that were recorded by some of the first Westerners to visit the Marquesas Islands have vanished. Most likely they were smashed by the people on their conversion to Christianity—which was the usual fate of ancient art objects.

STONE FIGURE (*TIKI*)

Marquesas Islands, central Polynesia
19th century or earlier
stone (basalt)
12.2 cm

Musée de Tahiti et des Îles—Te Fare Manaha, Puna'auia, Tahiti, 5691

While this small stone *tiki* has a patina and form unlike any other that is known from the Marquesas Islands, the shape of the eyes, the set of the head and neck, and the curving sides to the upper chest leave us in no doubt that it originated somewhere in those islands.

Its breasts, slightly raised and curved, give the impression of an old man who was strongly built when young, for the shoulders are still muscular. The head is sunk low on the shoulders and at the back of the neck is the broken stub of a loop, or ring, that was carved out of the original basalt. There are traces of a red substance engrained in the rock cavities; this is especially visible on the back, the back of the head and even in the surface where a piece is missing from the figure's right shoulder.

The remains of the broken ring suggest that this *tiki* figure was used or intended for fishing—not as bait, or as a weight, but as a source of fertility.[1] The sharp break in the figure's left leg appears to have been made with a metal instrument, which suggests that the figure was buried and rediscovered when a farmer located it with his spade. Burial of a stone *tiki* in a garden is also associated with traditional fertility practices.[2]

Its curving buttocks project to the rear, which adds to the impression of strength. Both legs are broken and missing and the remains of the left leg show that the legs were at right angles to the trunk, which implies the figure was seated, unlike any other known stone figure from the Marquesas Islands. The remaining thigh suggests that the legs were of human proportion rather than the usually massive legs of standing stone figures.

Most small stone *tiki* figures from the Marquesas that survived the iconoclasm are male, stocky, and with their hands either side of the navel, such as the other stone Marquesan figure in this exhibition (p 140). Of the 52 known stone *tiki* figures, 22 were created in this style and many of these share similar characteristics, which indicates that they were created by artists from one area. There are other types of stone *tiki* figures that are less well known, including a 43-centimetre tall female figure with her hands on either side of her navel.[3]

1 Handy 1923, pp 164–66 describes practices associated with fishing rites, including mention of 'stone fish gods (tiki)' and of a stone platform at Ta'a Oa on which the rites were performed and where stone *tiki* were buried when not in use.

2 See Babadzan 1993 for related practices with stone *ti'i* figures in Tahiti.

3 Menil Collection, Houston, c 3073, published in Hopps et al, 1984, p 359, no 304.

TIKI FIGURE

Marquesas Islands, central Polynesia
probably 19th century
whalebone
9.5 cm
private collection

This beautifully rendered *tiki* figure, carved from whalebone in the distinctive art style of the early nineteenth-century Marquesas Islands, was found in a river in France in the 1955–1960 period, upstream of a bridge[1]. It is possible that it was brought from the Marquesas Islands to France in the nineteenth century, and eventually hurled into the river as a result of the same forces that propelled so many Society Islands stone *tiki* figures into the Musée de Tahiti et des îles: their owners could not live with the figures any longer due to their persistent presence.

Its hands, one each side of the navel, include two carefully carved glyphs. They turn and rise up to form the arms, which connect to the seemingly very straight line of the shoulders. But the back of the head is constructed so that the ridge of the shoulders joins in the middle to form an arch that expands over the top of the head, creating a suspension hole.

The head is equal in size to the rest of the body, and the entire figure is balanced. This was achieved by raising the shoulders to the height of the lower part of the nose, and reducing the torso so that the figure's chin appears to be just above the navel and the two arms. The legs are massive, yet in perfect proportion to the rest of the body. The proportions of this figure are those also found in the small bone figures known as *ivi po'o*.

The mouth is particularly well developed, with a double ridge for the lower lip. In some light, a circular mark can be seen in the centre of the figure's left eye, possibly outlining a pupil, but it is so indistinct that it might be accidental damage.

The suspension hole is similar to those on stone fishnet weights that are carved as *tiki*. There is use-wear in the hole and the current owner believes it may have been used as a magical charm for fishing. Whalebone is an unusual material in the Marquesas Islands where whale teeth were much more commonly used, particularly for body ornaments and decoration.

1 Pont Charrault, Sèvre Niortaise River, western France

IVI PO'O

Marquesas Islands, central Polynesia
19th century or earlier
bone, fibre, hair
9.5 cm (including hair)
National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, 2012.1299

This is a very rare, long-nosed form of *ivi po'o* (*ivi* means 'bone'[1]; a *po'o* is a special type of container associated with human remains). *Ivi po'o* were generally made from the bone of a dead relative or enemy, so that the magical power of that person could be kept alive, but dormant. The hair enclosed in the bone was there, sleeping, waiting for revenge.[2]

Long-nosed images from the Marquesas Islands are rare, and it is not yet known whether they were a regional variant or there was another reason for such a distinctive difference. The other elements on this *ivi po'o*—including the horizontal ridge across the pupil, the depiction of the hands, the glyph at the back, and the squared shoulders—are all typical of the style that was used in the early nineteenth century in the Marquesas Islands.

1 On Tonga, in western Polynesia, *ivi* has the additional connotation of power, might, ability (p 33).
2 Paraphrased from Steinen 1928, vol 2, p 258.

MALE FIGURE

Taipi Vai valley, Nuku Hiva, Marquesas Islands, central Polynesia
before 1848
wood, glass beads, teeth, string
43 cm
Musée de la Castre, Cannes, 2011.0.457

What this figure lacks in size is made up in aggression. He was taken from a village in the middle of the night during a French military raid, part of a 'tour' of the Taipi valley to subdue the people.

Unlike many islands or archipelagos in Polynesia in the early nineteenth century, the Marquesas Islands were not unified under one ruler. Two primary political groups controlled Nuku Hiva (the largest island) in this period: the Taipi in the Taipi Vai valley (the source of this figure) and the Te'I'i in the Taiohae and related valleys. The Te'I'i tended to work with the increasing numbers of foreigners that were using the anchorage at the mouth of the Taiohae valley. In contrast, the Taipi tried to repel these outsiders, holding out until 1813 when Captain David Porter of the US navy arrived as commander of the warship USS *Essex*. He lost the first battle against the Taipi, but in an alliance with the Te'I'i, fought back and devastated the Taipi. This defeat would have shaken the people's faith in their traditional beliefs, and was probably the beginning of the end for the carving of wood figures such as this one. In 1833, Protestant missionaries tried to propagate Christianity on Nuku Hiva but abandoned their attempts as futile in 1834.[1] Contact with Western cultures, however, continued to escalate throughout the 1840s.

Although the source of the figure's aggression is not clear, he was known to Edmond de Ginoux[2] as 'Te Varoua Ino', a Tahitian phrase that can be translated as 'the evil spirit'.

During a photography session, Christophe Roustan Delatour of the Musée de La Castre described the figure's body posture as 'tense, shifting, almost nervous' in contrast to two other large figures from the Marquesas Islands at the museum '… whose body language is harmonious, serene, hieratic, composed'.[3]

Surprisingly, he found a hole several centimetres in diameter on top of the figure's head. The depth is unknown as it has been filled with white wax. The hole does not seem to be associated with rot or with the soft inner core that is often the first to decay in a wood figure. It appears to have been deliberately made in the figure.

The hands are on either side of a small mound that probably represents the navel. From the side the body is clearly broadest at the navel region and the figure has bent knees, almost as though it is sitting. The head is bent forwards so that to see the face clearly, the viewer must be lower than the figure and look up. Delatour commented that from this perspective, '… he seems to be looking down at you, at the world, with a certain contempt …'.[4]

The figure is said to be a *tiki* and may have represented an ancestor, serving as a container for an ancestor's *varoua* (the roaming spirit of someone killed before their time) or other form of spirit.

1 Armstrong & Armstrong 1887, p 14.

2 It is likely that Edmond de Ginoux obtained this figure from a member of the French military in 1840, either in the Marquesas Islands or in Tahiti.

3 Christophe Roustan Delatour (adjoint au conservateur des musées, Musée de La Castre), pers comm, 11 September 2013.

4 ibid.

'U'U

Marquesas Islands, central Polynesia
19th century or earlier
wood
151.5 cm

National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, 2008.185

On one level *'u'u* are beautifully made clubs that are status objects in a warrior society and instantly identifiable.

Closer examination allows an appreciation of the artistry that went into making such a weapon. It started by locating the tree with the right grain, owned by the right person, selected then felled with absolute respect for the *atua* associated with the land, the tree and the owner of the rights to it. Only then began the work of carving the log into a work of art.

Karl von den Steinen was fascinated with the *'u'u* and, as a result of his work on the Marquesas Islands, provided a comprehensive analysis and description of the imagery carved in relief on the surface. From his work we gain the understanding that an *'u'u* was a live being, created by the sculptor who was usually its owner. It is not clear, however, at what level these clubs were considered to be 'alive'.

The imagery includes faces within faces—there are at least five faces as well two 'breathe' signs (*puhi*) on the club.

Although the earliest known image of an *'u'u* was recorded by the artist Tilesius von Tilenau in 1803,[1] and von den Steinen recorded several collected by Captain Jeffrie in 1802,[2] it is clear from the appearance of all known *'u'u* that they were made at least several decades before they were first sighted by Westerners. This *'u'u* has been radiocarbon dated[3] and, although caution must be used in interpreting radiocarbon dates of wood, the results are within the expected range, given the use-wear apparent on most *'u'u* in museum collections.

It is difficult to guess how many *'u'u* of the classical (pre-European) style have survived. Several hundred have been sighted in museums and probably a similar number exist in private collections around the world. In the 1990s there were *'u'u* for sale in most tribal art auctions in New York. They were considered to be a stable commodity and their market price was a standard for measuring the state of the auction market.

Although *'u'u* are clubs—weapons for killing people—their significance is not fully understood out of context. In pre-Christian Marquesan society there were generally two classes of priest associated with the sacred enclosures: *tau'a* and *tahuna o'ono*. A *tau'a* (or *tau'a nui*) was an inspirational priest and subject to possession by spirits or gods.[4] They could be male or female and from any class in society, but usually they were male and related to the tribal chief. The *tahuna o'ono* were in charge of the ritual, the choir and the chants. Helping the inspirational priest were three types of temple assistant—*moa*, *taputoho*, and *'u'u*. The *'u'u* assistants had killed an enemy in battle, hence their title. Their main duty was to relieve the inspirational priests from the more laborious parts of the process of human immolation. As a reward for this work, they gained the privilege of feasting with the priests.[5]

1 Wilhèlm Gottlieb Tilesius von Tilenau was ship's doctor, marine biologist and expedition artist on Captain Adam Johann von Krusenstern's voyage around the world 1803–1806, undertaken for Alexander I, emperor of Russia.

2 Now in the Peabody Museum, Salem, registered as both E5027 & E5030, Gift of John Fitzpatrick Jeffrie, 1803.

3 Two samples were radiocarbon dated at the Australian National University in 2010. Core: 1653–1685 (21% probability), 1729–1803 (79% probability); surface: 1646–1682 (29% probability), 1730–1802 (71% probability).

4 Handy 1923, pp 223–230.

5 Stewart 1831, p 276.

CHART

OF THE PARTS OF THE

SANDWICH ISLANDS,

visited in March 1786 by the

Boussole & Astrolabe,

commanded by the Chevalier de Lang[illegible] and Fleuriot de Langle

Hawaiian Islands

HAWAIIAN ISLANDS

According to oral traditions,[1] the original inhabitants of the Hawaiian islands probably came from Samoa, and later from the Marquesas Islands and Tahiti. Archaeologists and linguists agree that initial occupation took place 900–1000 years ago.

When Captain James Cook visited Hawai'i in 1778, he estimated that there were 400,000 people living on the eight inhabited islands of the archipelago, more than half of them on the big island of Hawai'i. Within 50 years, war and disease reduced the population to less than 150,000.

Journals from Cook's and George Vancouver's voyages, as well as later reports, such as those from Rev William Ellis of the London Missionary Society, Captain Lord Byron, commander of HMS *Blonde* and chaplain Richard Bloxam, also on HMS *Blonde*, indicate that in the late-eighteenth century there were many hundreds and probably thousands of wood figures stationed in sacred enclosures on all the inhabited islands of the Hawaiian archipelago. Most, if not all, of these figures represented deified ancestors in some way. By Cook's time the people's relationship to these wood figures was complex and not easily categorised. On the battlefield, war gods were held or positioned with a priest and armies placed their faith and desire for victory in them. If the enemy managed to break through and seize the god, the war was virtually over.

> They do not appear to have imagined these gods exerted any protecting influence over their devotees, but that their presence and their power destroyed the courage and strength of their enemies, and filled their hearts with terror and dismay.[2]

The sacred enclosures in Hawai'i, known as *heiau*, were the focus of religious life and the source of the vitality that animated Hawaiian sculpture. They were *taboo* and their inner sanctum, where serious ritual activity took place, was only entered by high priests and the king. *Heiau* are understood to be the sanctuary where idols were worshipped.

In the early nineteenth century, about 800 *heiau* existed throughout the islands, some of which dated from the twelfth century. Each was built by an *ali'i* (aristocrat or chief) or a *moi* (king of an island, or of the entire archipelago), and dedicated to one or several deities. Those *heiau* for which the dedicated deity is known were found to be associated with these *atua*: Kane; Kane and Kaneloa together (brothers); Kane and Lono together; Laka (a woman's hula deity); Ku and Hina together; Kamohoalii (a shark deity); Kanehekili; Hina-kuku-kapa; or, Kamapuaa.[3]

The four primary gods of Hawai'i are Ku, Kane, Kanaloa and Lono. These were sometimes regarded as *aumakua* (ancestral gods), particularly by the highest chiefs.[4]

While thousands of supernatural beings existed in pre-Christian Hawaiian society, far fewer were recorded in direct association with art objects (idols). About 250 idols of feather, wood or stone survive in public collections, with others in private hands. This is just a small proportion of the idols that existed before the iconoclasm of 1819, though the exact number before that date is not known.

Not every god had a physical idol, such as a carved art object, for its followers to worship. Many *akua* were known by their geographical locations, such as waterfalls or dangerous precipices, and were respected and worshipped by their followers.

It appears that most physical images of gods were directly linked to *heiau* and the formal priest network. As such they would have been owned by the aristocracy, the chiefs, who would use them to communicate with their particular deities. It is most likely that over its life of 500 years a *heiau* consecrated to Kane, for example, would have housed hundreds of different idols associated with a wide range of *atua* worshipped by the many successive owners of the *heiau*.

To comprehend some of the patterns in the worlds of supernatural beings, Western researchers, in consultation with Hawaiian *kahuna* (priests), have described three primary categories: state or political gods (*akua*), ancestral gods (*aumakua*), and beings used in sorcery (*unihipili*).[5]

It is not clear whether these categories of *atua* reflect the categories of idols located within *heiau*. Political gods, such as those propagated throughout the Hawaiian islands by Kamehamaha, who conquered the islands and formally established the Kingdom of Hawai'i in 1810, were certainly represented by idols in *heiau*, for they were his symbols of dominance. But the ancestral gods of a lesser chief, who kept a low profile far from the centres of power, were not nearly as likely to have been represented in sculpture and placed in these icons in the political landscape.

The people regarded the worship of idols as a virtue, and they had a strong conviction that, if the king were devout, his government would survive and treat them well.[6] Each man had his own god, and it would differ from the next man's god. A man worshipped a god that presided over the occupation or profession that he followed. Many of the men's gods were associated with or derived from the four primary gods, Ku, Lono, Kane and Kanaloa. They had names such as Ku-maka-nui and Kane-hoa-lani.[7] Aristocratic women had their own set of gods that included reptile (*mo'o*) deities such as Kiha-Wahine. Common women apparently had no deities and are said to have worshipped nothing.

It is not clear whether the names of the wood and stone figures recorded by early nineteenth-century Westerners match these god names. Much depended upon the interaction, the questions asked, and how accurately something spoken in an unfamiliar language was understood and transcribed.

Emerson described how a sorcery spirit (*unihipili*) was created and cultivated:

> the worship (*hoomanamana*), rendered to the spirit is not an ascription of power already possessed by the object worshipped, but an imparting to it of *mana* (power) which but f or this worship it would never have. In short, the god does not make the *kahuna* (priest), but the *kahuna* often makes his god.[8]

He observed of the newly empowered *unihipili*:

> He feels a strange supernatural power resting upon him, enabling him to see into the mysteries of the spirit world, and to do wonderful things, impossible to other men.[9]

Neither David (Davida) Malo nor Nathaniel Emerson described the *unihipili* as being resident inside an art object.

Aumakua, generally understood to be ancestral spirits, were widely known. Emerson noted that many *aumakua* retained the shadowy form of a human spirit. Others had been transformed into animal forms or, as some preferred, they manifested themselves through these animals. Other *aumakua* had taken up their abode in trees, stones and other objects. Everything strange and unusual became a god.[10] Again, both Malo and Emerson were silent about the relationship of *aumakua* to art objects.

Malo gave us an insight into the process of the creation of idols in Hawaiian society in his chapter[11] on the rituals that a king undertook in order to build a *heiau* of the type known as *luakini*, usually a war temple, but sometimes used to make the crops flourish.

Much planning was involved after the decision was made whether to renew an old *heiau* with its old idols, or to build a new *heiau* with new idols. The *lana-nuu-mamao* was the building to house the idols and was the central focus of the *heiau*. Within this building was a pit to contain the sacrifices. The old idols were brought in and a space was made in the midst of them to set up the new idol that was to be made, called the *moi* (*mo-i*).

After a period of purification, a perfect tree in the forest was selected. A procession led by the king, together with attendants carrying idols and various offerings, came into the forest. In absolute silence the *kahuna* offered the *aha* prayer while holding the axe and the king held the pig. The king dashed the pig to the ground, killing it, and offered it as a sacrifice. The *kahuna* then took a chip out of the tree and beheaded a criminal who had been brought along for this purpose. The tree was felled, the pig was roasted and the work of carving the idol was undertaken by the image-carver. After they had satisfied their hunger, the pig's remains, together with the body of the man, were buried at the root of the tree from which the image had been made.

1 Oral traditions indicate that a chief called Hawaii-loa sailed east and found the islands of Hawai'i and Maui. Wakea and his wife Papa established the first line of chiefs. A people known as Menehune feature amongst the earliest builders, their memory in Hawai'i records them as elves or dwarfs. They are also known in Tahiti where they are referred to as the lowest class of people.

2 Ellis 1826, p 119.

3 Only around 10 per cent of *heiau* sites have known deity associations (Thrum 1906).

4 Emerson 1892, p 16.

5 ibid.

6 Malo 1893, p 105.

7 ibid., chpt 23.

8 Emerson 1892, p 4.

9 ibid., p 4.

10 ibid., p 23.

11 Malo 1893, chpt 37.

TEMPLE FIGURE

Hawai'i, northern Polynesia
created before 1819
American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions Collection, 1895
wood (*Artocarpus sp*)
195.5 cm

Bishop Museum, Honolulu, 07654

This powerful figure, perhaps the greatest icon of the Hawaiian people left standing today on Hawaiian soil, is now generally known as Kū. His full title is Kū ka'ili moku—Kū the land grabber—and he is the image of the god of the Hawaiian people today. He is one of the three great temple images that survived the iconoclasm.[1]

All three are based on one sculptural idea, illustrated in this figure by the long tumbling hair erupting from deep within his forehead, forming two waves on each side of his head that cascade past each shoulder to the ends of his cocked hands.

His sloping eyes, with their central ridge, are heavy with sleep and embedded in his hair. His huge, jutting jaw is rimmed with teeth and exudes aggression and dominance. It is the face of a being who is capable of crushing anybody in his path.

The lithe and muscular body, springing slightly on its toes, appears ready to pounce.

Louis Choris, artist on the Russian brig *Rurik*, which visited Hawai'i in 1816 and 1817, sketched this figure in 1816. (The sketch is now in the Honolulu Museum of Art). It can be identified as the Bishop Museum's figure by the bow-shaped element in the centre of the figure's hair, above its nose. Choris wrote the name 'Tanataea' on the drawing, which would be written as 'Kanaka ea' today, meaning 'manly figure [from the commoner class] rising up from a prone position'. In his 1822 publication,[2] an engraving of this drawing altered the name to 'Tanatatea', which would be written today as 'Kanaka kea' meaning 'manly, virile'.

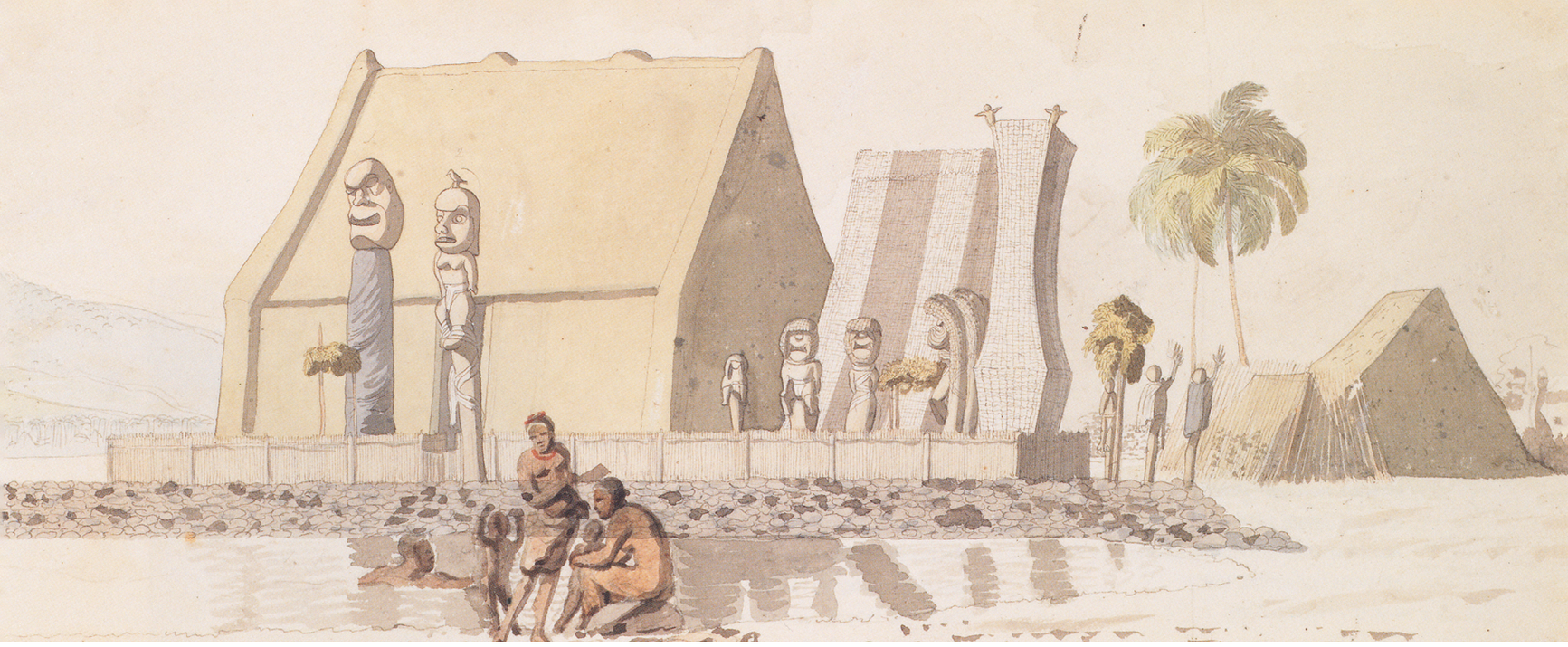
Choris also sketched a closely related figure called Maruha (which could mean 'dry, barren').

Choris made at least 12 independent sketches of idols, but the publications and journals associated with the *Rurik*'s visits to Hawai'i in November–December 1816 and again in September–October 1817 do not make it clear where he made them.

At daybreak on 24 November 1816, the *Rurik* approached the bay of Ti-utatua. Its captain, Otto Kotzebue, together with Choris and several officers, spent the day with Tamaahmaah (Kamehameha) and his people,

Louis Choris *Tanataea*
Honolulu Museum of Art, Gift of the Honolulu Art Society, 1944

Louis Choris *Maruha Wahu*
Honolulu Museum of Art, Gift of the Honolulu Art Society, 1944



Louis Choris *Temple on the island of Hawaii* 1816 ink, ink wash and watercolour over pencil 17.3 x 43.34 cm Honolulu Museum of Art Gift of the Honolulu Art Society, 1944 (12159)

often close to the *heiau*. That evening the *Rurik* set sail for Woahoo (Oahu). From Kotzebue's record of the day's events, it is clear that only Kamehameha entered the *heiau* (which is now known as Kamakahonu), so Choris could only have recorded his images from outside the enclosure.

> Tamaahmaah's first walk was to the morai; he embraced one of the statues, which was hung round more than the others, with fruits and pieces of a sacrificed hog, saying, 'These are our gods, whom I worship; whether I do right or wrong, I do not know; but I follow my faith, which cannot be wicked, as it commands me never to do wrong.' … While the king is gone into the morai, nobody is allowed to enter; and during that time we admired the Colossal idols, cut in wood, and representing the most hideous caricatures. Tamaahmaah soon returned, conducted us to the house in which he had first received us; and we took our place as before, on chairs, while the distinguished personages seated themselves on the ground.[3]

Choris could have sketched this remarkable view of Kamehameha's *heiau* during these few hours.

This watercolour was made by Choris at Kailua Bay[4] and includes three figures similar to this one standing together inside the *heiau* enclosure. In all, it shows eight wood figures, including two very tall figures placed beside the main building on either side of the fence. He recorded the outside figure (with a bird on its head) as an image of a war god.[5]

After comparing the watercolour of the *heiau* and the sketches of the figures, it is not clear whether the sketches show the figures around the *heiau*. There are no other known sketches of the two tall figures with distinctive faces in front of the building.

Kotzebue and Choris returned to Kamehameha's residence the following year on 28 September. None of Choris's sketches are dated and it is possible that his sketches of the figures were made at this time. It is equally possible, however, that Choris sketched the 12 figures on the island of Oahu.

On 11 October 1817 Kotzebue was invited into a *heiau* in Hona-rara (Honolulu, Oahu island) that had been rebuilt after the old one had been profaned by Westerners a year earlier. Here he found the *heiau* fenced by bamboo canes:

> in the middle of the place six small houses standing close to each other, formed a half circle: each of these chapels was surrounded with a low bamboo fence, above which the colossal heads of the gods looked over like sentinels. The necks which supported their enormous heads were decorated with hogs'-flesh; and several gods had only the withered skeleton of

> a hog. … I was the more astonished when the priests themselves made me observe the caricatures, felt their noses and eyes, tried to imitate, in various ways, the distorted faces, and laughed heartily at their wit. … One of the small chapels was covered round about with mats; from this proceeded the noise of the muffled drum, sometimes interrupted by the lamentable cries of a man.[6]

It is well known that Kamehameha's family *akua* (*atua*) Kū-ka'ili-moku was used as a war god during Kamehameha's conquest of all the islands of Hawai'i. Less well known is that images of this *atua* were generally 'feathered gods', the type known as *akua-hulu-manu*,[7] and that they were also used for fertility. Richard Bloxam, chaplain of HMS *Blonde*, wrote in his 1825 diary:

> Note: the 'Kiëdë' or Kings God as soon as it entered the temple was placed above the altar. The prayer to this idol was called 'Hoi.e.mak.ouwah.' and generally consisted of intreating it for rain & the fruits of the earth to increase &c.[8]

Missionary Rev William Ellis, of the London Missionary Society, also recorded Tairi (Ka'ili) as Kamehameha's portable feathered war god;[9] and also as a large wooden idol at *heiau* Bukohala at Honokoa, Hawai'i.[10] The large figure that is now known as Kū at the Peabody Museum Salem[11] was acquired with the name Koila Moku, god of medicine.

It should be noted that by 1810 Kamehameha had conquered all of the Hawaiian islands and formally established the Kingdom of Hawai'i. When Choris and Kotzebue were in Hawai'i, Kamehameha was maintaining control of his conquests, but was not waging war. Consequently his *atua* were not being used as war gods, but were serving more peaceful purposes.

1 The three large figures that are now known as Kū are Peabody Museum Salem E 12071 (recorded with the name Koila Moku, god of medicine); British Museum London Oc1839,0426.8 (no name recorded); and Bishop Museum 7654 (no name recorded with the figure). Another three wood figures that are closely related in style are: British Museum Oc,LMS.223; British Museum Oc.1656 (a female figure); and Pitt Rivers Museum Oxford University 1954.4.33.

2 Choris 1822, p 12.

3 Kotzebue 1821, pp 311–12.

4 Recorded as Tiritatéa Bay by Choris 1822; and as Ti-atatoo, Ti-utatua, and Teiatatooa Bay by Captain Otto Kotzebue.

5 *La planche V représente le temple du roi; le dieu qui porte un oiseau sur la tête est celui de la guerre* (pl 5 (a version of *Temple on the island of Hawaii*) represents the temple of the king; the god that carries a bird on the head is that of war).

6 Kotzebue 1821, vol 2, pp 201–02.

7 Malo 1893, p 111, n 1. '*Ku-kailu-moku*, the war god of Kamehameha, was a feather god, *akua-hulu-manu*.'

8 Bloxam 1825, p 144, left.

9 Ellis 1826, p 116.

10 ibid., p 67.

11 Peabody Museum Salem E 12071.

FIGURE CALLED MAEE

Hawai'i, northern Polynesia
created before March 1779
collected at Hale o Keawe by Lord George Anson Byron, 1825
wood, shell, hair, teeth
66 cm

British Museum, London, Oc.1657

This sculpture, its head thrown back, is so well balanced it can stand on its feet without support,[1] and is clearly the work of a master artist. At first glance the figure appears to be female, for the projecting pectorals of the strongly muscled body give the impression of breasts. But it is not clear whether this figure was intended to be male, female, or without gender, for, like many Hawaiian figures, it was created without sexual organs.

From every angle this figure creates interest. The head thrusts upward, its rigid tongue appears to be screaming in agony, the eyes bulge blankly into the sky.

This figure matches the description of one seen in a large house in a bay to the south of Karakakooa,[2] Hawai'i, during Captain James Cook's third voyage in March 1779.

> A party of us were conduced to a large house, in a bay to the southward of Karakakooa, in which we beheld the black figure of a man, resting on his toes and fingers, and his head was inclined backward; the limbs were well proportioned, and the whole was beautifully polished. This figure was called Maee; round which thirteen others were placed, with shapes rude and distorted. These, we were told, were the Eatooas of deceased chiefs, whose names they repeated. Plenty of Whattas were seen within the place, with the remains of offerings on many of them.[3]

Chaplain Richard Bloxam, of HMS *Blonde* under the command of Lord Byron (cousin of the poet), recorded in his journal for Friday 17 July 1825 his visit to the house known as Hale-o-Keawe. Byron had visited the house earlier in the day with the permission of William Pitt Kalanimoku (or Karaimoku), the chief minister of Hawai'i. Byron and the large party of officers (but not Bloxam) who accompanied him were the first Europeans allowed to enter this previously sacred mausoleum:

> … Karaimoku as a mark of great favour permitted his Lordship to enter it—take with him who he pleased, and carry away whatever he chose from it …
>
> As we had liberty to take out what we chose—His Lordship fixed his choice on a beautifully carved image of a woman on her hands & knees—this our Guide told us was the idol upon which all the Kings when they entered the Temple — used to rest themselves before sacrifice.[4]

In his account of the *Blonde*'s visit to Hawai'i, Byron discusses this figure and its name:[5]

> The year is sacred, and is called Maee. Now it is curious that Captain King saw a polished idol called Maee, of unusually good workmanship, resting on the toes and fingers, and having about it thirteen small idols representing inferior Etooas or spirits; these probably were designed for the thirteen months of which the year was composed. There was besides another name for the year, seldom pronounced by profane lips; it was Tettowmattatayo. The Hawaiian language has distinct names for the nights of the moon, and time is counted by nights instead of days.[6]

It has been suggested that King misheard the name Mo'i and wrote it as Maee .[7] In Lorrin Andrews' 1865 dictionary the primary meaning of *mo'i*, noun and adjective, is 'a sovereign; one in whom is supreme authority; supreme; royal; lordly; pertaining to the gods; with reference to *haku*, *alii*, and *akua*'.

1 An observation noted by BAL Cranstone, assistant keeper at the British Museum in 1963, when corresponding with Mrs Marion Kelly.

2 Today known as Kealakekua, on the west coast of the Big Island of Hawai'i.

3 King 1784, p 329.

4 Bloxam 1825, p 131 right, p 132 right.

5 This is not confirmed in David Malo's authoritative work *Hawaiian antiquities*. But there was considerable variation in the 18th and early 19th century Hawaiian calendar from island to island.

6 Byron in Graham 1826, p 12.

7 Cox & Davenport 1988, p 161.

FIGURE

Hawai'i, northern Polynesia
collected in the Hawaiian islands by
Midshipman John Knowles of HMS *Blonde*, 1825
wood, shell, hair, bark cloth
40.6 cm

British Museum, London, Oc1944,02.716

There are few works of art that convey the same dynamic energy displayed by this figure. The extremely well-developed pectorals reflect the perfect physique that was found in the Hawaiian aristocracy of the mid-to-late eighteenth century. The figure appears to be ready to spring, with all muscles flexed, prepared for action. If there were feet, it would have been balanced on their balls. Human hair on its head suggests that this figure could have been an image of a person, a deified ancestor. The purpose of the detachable tongue (which is now missing) remains a mystery.

Around the middle of the figure is a loin cloth (*malo*), made of bark cloth (*kapa*). Lorrin Andrews' 1865 dictionary refers to '*e lawe ia mai no ko ke alii kane akua kaai*'—a girdle placed by an aristocrat (chief) around the loins of an *akua*.

It is generally assumed that this figure originally stood in the sacred mausoleum known as Hale-o-Keawe, at Honaunau, Hawai'i. From there, it was brought to England in 1825 by John Knowles, midshipman of HMS *Blonde*, which was returning to Hawai'i the bodies of the king and queen who had died from measles during a state visit to Britain in 1824. Knowles was one of a large party of officers with Lord Byron, commander of HMS *Blonde*, given access by Karaimoku (William Pitt Kalanimoku, chief minister of Hawai'i) to take what they wanted from the mausoleum. The officers and men of HMS *Blonde* did also, however, acquire 'idols' from a number of locations around the Hawaiian islands.[1]

1 Hooper (2006, p 90) notes that HMS *Blonde* collected images at several places on Hawai'i, not just at Hale-o-Keawe, and this figure cannot be proven to come from this site.

FEATHERED GOD—*AKUA HULU MANU*

Hawai'i, northern Polynesia
created before 1819
fibre netting, feathers, teeth, shell, wood
56 cm

National Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, Wellington, FE 325

Uniquely Hawaiian, these feathered images ranked high in the hierarchy of gods, for they were associated with war and were used as war gods. They were treated differently from wooden gods in significant ways. In the Makahiki festival, the feathered gods were paraded the day before the wooden gods.[1] When a tree was felled and used to make an idol, the feathered god was always present, with its supporting staff planted in the ground.[2] There are 19 feathered gods known to have survived, and they are known generically as *akua hulu manu* (feather god).[3] Although the history of this feathered god is not known, the documentation of other such gods is useful in understanding its world.

Kalani'ōpu'u (Terreeoboo) was the major *ari'i* (king) of the Big Island of Hawaii when Captain James Cook visited in 1779. Kalani'ōpu'u made a major display of his diplomatic skills:

> At Noon (26 January 1779) Terreeoboo in a large Canoe attended by two others set out from the Village, & paddled towards the Ships in great state. In the first Canoe was Terreeoboo, In the Second Kao with 4 Images, the third was fill'd with hogs & Vegetables, as they went along those in the Center Canoe kept Singing with much Solemnity; from which we concluded that this procession had some of their religious ceremonys mixt with it; but instead of going on board they came to our side, their appearance very grand, the Chiefs standing up drest in their Cloaks & Caps, & in the Center Canoe were the busts of what we suppose their Gods made of basket work, variously covered with red, black, white, & Yellow feathers, the Eyes represent'd by a bit of Pearl Oyster Shell with a black button, & the teeth were those of dogs, the mouths of all were strangely distorted, as well as other features.[4]

The watercolours of John Webber, artist on Cook's third voyage, depict five feathered heads used in this and one other dramatic sea-going presentation.[5]

At least two feathered gods were found in the sacred mausoleum of kings and principal chiefs at Honaunau. One was placed over the bones of Kalani'ōpu'u, who was king of Hawai'i from 1729–1782. The other was on a nearby ledge.[6] Lord Byron, captain of *HMS Blonde*, wrote:

> On entering the morai we saw on one hand a line of deities made of wickerwork, clothed in fine tapa, now nearly destroyed by time, and adorned with feathered helmets and masks, made more hideous by rows of sharks' teeth, and tufts of human hair; each differing a little from the other, but all preserving a strong family likeness. Under these the bones of the ancient kings of the Island are said to be deposited; and near them the favourite weapons of deceased chiefs and heroes, their ornaments, and whatever else might have been pleasing to them while alive.[7]

A feathered god once belonged to Kekuaokalani, son of Kamehameha's younger brother and rebel cousin to Riho Riho (today known as Liholiho), who was killed in the last war involving these images. A priest as well as high chief, Kekuaokalani was slain at the moment he raised his idol standard (the feathered god) to urge his vassals to attack. The feathered god then became known as Akua Pio (captive god). Before this final war, the possessor carried it on a wood support when he went to the *heiau* or on any public occasion. A crier preceded the feathered god, calling on all islanders to prostrate themselves in front of it, or die.

Another feathered idol named Keoloeva was presented to Byron by Naihi (national orator and chief at Karakakua Bay, Hawai'i). At the time it was more than 150 years old and had been worshipped by Naihi's father, and his fathers before him.[8]

Tairi[9] was originally the war god of Kamehameha's family, but with many manifestations. In his discussions with old priests in 1825, chaplain Richard Bloxam of HMS *Blonde* recorded Kiëdë as the name of a feathered god. He was told that as soon as it entered the temple it was placed above the altar.[10] Prayers to this idol were oriented toward increasing the fertility of the fruits of the earth. Today Tairi (Kiëdë) is known as Kū-ka-ili-moku.

1 Malo 1898, p 189.
2 ibid., p 202.
3 ibid., p 111.
4 King in Cook, *Journals* 3, 1, 512.
5 John Webber 1779, *A canoe of the Sandwich Islands, the rowers masked*, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra. 2013.4129.9.145; John Webber 1779, *Tereoboo, King of Owyhee, bringing presents to Capt. Cook*, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra. 2013.4129.9.140.
6 Bloxam, 1824–1825, p 132 left.
7 Graham (ed) 1826, p 200.
8 Bloxam RR, 1824–1825, p 143 right.
9 Orthography in the early nineteenth century was not standardised.
10 Both Tairi and Kiëdë are written as Ka'ili in today's orthography, which literally means 'net'.

Ākua
ĀKUA

Within me is the presence of all that has come before and all that is to come. My piko (*navel of the past, present and future*) are my connections to these wā (*spaces in between these periods of time*). Through these pathways, I am linked to my ākua (*gods*). The One, the Four, the Forty, the Four Hundred, the Four Thousand, the Forty Thousand, the Four Hundred Thousand, the multitude—these are my gods, my ancestors, who guide me on my journey as a Kanaka Maoli and visual artist of today.

Being of a time and culture that has been through numerous changes during our time here in these islands, our links to our distant past and, in some cases, our recent past, have suffered a cultural and spiritual disconnect. Some people might think of this as a deficit, but for me as a visual artist, it allows me to build a new relationship with these ākua—a relationship that is current and dynamic, not frozen in a stagnant state. If we are the representations of our ākua, what does that say about us, their descendants?

My ākua are dynamic, and so are the pilina (*relationships*) that exist between us. This ever-changing and evolving conversation is evident in the treasures of this collection—portraits or receptacles for the ākua to inhabit, allowing the tie between the physical and the spiritual to become that much more pili (*entwined*). It may never be known exactly why these treasures were created, or, in some cases, how they came to be, but that is not necessarily for us to know. The most important aspect for me as a Kanaka Maoli of today is to know and understand that my ancestors understood the interconnectedness of all things animate and inanimate, seen and unseen, of the past, present, and future, and that it all begins and ends with the ākua. I am humbly only another link in this continuum.

To maintain this relationship, I continue to look to my ancestors as a source of inspiration for the objects that I create today to become the treasures of tomorrow. Numerous kiʻi (*images*) in this collection have served as foundations for my conversations and the purpose of my art. Just as my ancestors created these kiʻi to serve as receptacles for the ākua to inhabit, I believe that my works serve this purpose in today's context. I may not imbue these works with the mana (*spiritual essence or energy*) of the ākua through the same means and ways of my ancestors, but I do believe that such a transfer of mana still occurs. This mana is what we see and feel when we gaze upon the treasures of the ākua, which keep us linked to generations past, present, and to come.

Carl Franklin Kaʻailāʻau Pao

AKUA KA'AI

Hawai'i, northern Polynesia
collected during the third voyage of Captain James Cook 1776–1780
wood, fibre
21.5 cm

Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, Cambridge University, 1922.917

When compared to most Hawaiian wood figures, this figure is sparse, almost unfinished, yet its provenance indicates that it dates from the mid-to-late eighteenth century. Given its size, it was probably used as an *akua ka'ai*—a portable god. The crest on top of its head most likely represented a *mahiole* (feathered helmet), a symbol worn by an aristocrat in war.

The figure is made of a softer wood than is usual in Hawai'i; although not all Hawaiian wood figures were made from hard wood that could be sculpted and polished. For example, chaplain Richard Bloxam of HMS *Blonde* refers to a wooden idol that was presented to Captain Lord Byron by Kalanimoku, the origins of which lay in the experience of a priest while walking to the *heiau* (sacred enclosure) on what is now Diamond Head, near Waikiki on the island of Oahu. A voice called to him from a lauhala tree (*Pandanus tectorius*), telling him that too many people had broken *taboo* and that, within two months, many would die. Within ten weeks more than half the population of the island died from yellow fever, brought by a ship from China. The tree was cut down with much ceremony and fabricated into a god who became the subject of worship and sacrifices until the destruction of idolatry in 1819. Pandanus wood is not known for its sculptural qualities, but in this case was used because of its association with an *atua*.[1]

1 Bloxam, RR, *Journal* 1824–1825, p 143 left.

AKUA KA'AI

Hawai'i, northern Polynesia
18th century or earlier
wood, shell
25 cm

Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, University of Cambridge, D 1958.3

The style of this Hawaiian figure is unusual. The long lower legs make up almost half its total length. The thighs are reduced to supports for the body, which curves over and carries a large head. The arms hang down, and much of their original shape is missing. Between the lips is a protruding tongue, characteristic of many Hawaiian figures. Given its human form and the physical evidence that it has been handled over a long period, it is possible that it represented a deified ancestor.

This small wood figure is not well known and, until now, has not featured in any publications. The label painted on the base that supports the figure reads 'Idol Owyhee'. Register information indicates that the figure came to the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, University of Cambridge, as a Methodist Missionary loan, but its original provenance is not known.

It is not clear whether the shell layer on the eyes is original. The figure most likely dates from the eighteenth century, or even earlier, and it is unlikely that fragile shell would have survived as long as the body. At some point the figure was mutilated when the genitalia were brutally removed and the figure was broken in the process.

Given its age, we can only guess the reason for this figure's existence, but it was most likely an *akua ka'ai* (literally a god with a sash). These were portable figures containing the *akua*, or the connection to the *akua*. They were owned by chiefs and looked after by a *kahu*,[1] the man responsible for the *akua ka'ai*'s safety. In battle, the *kahu* would have the *akua ka'ai* bound to his body with a sash and would wear upon his own head the *mahiole* feather helmet that was said to be worn by the idol.[2]

Another use for *akua ka'ai* was at the moment a first-born prince and first-born princess first made love to conceive the next generation of aristocrats. A tent made of bark cloth was set up in an open place where everyone could witness the event. The princess was escorted inside by her ladies. The prince arrived and set up his *akua ka'ai* outside the tent, before entering. Keeping watch were hundreds of people, including assembled priests uttering incantations and prayers to the gods that the union of the two chiefs might prove fruitful.[3]

1 A *kahu* is an honoured or upper servant, guardian, or nurse (Andrews 1865).
2 Malo 1898, p 111.
3 ibid., pp 179–80.

FIGURE

Hawai'i, northern Polynesia
created before 1891
wood
48.3 cm

Temple Square Museum, Salt Lake City Museum, LDS 20-102

Overshadowing the man underneath, the extravagant spiked curve is an image of the Hawaiian religious system under threat and nearing the end of its centrality for the people, for it is based upon that ultimate symbol of a leader—the feathered helmet that arches high and makes a leader even more of a beacon to his people. It is a helmet that dominates the man; the symbol is stronger than its bearer.

This figure was created when metal tools were available and artists worked comparatively quickly. This late phase finished abruptly in 1819 when the king, Liholiho, abolished the *taboo* system, dissolved the power of the priests and ended idolatry.

Although the spiked crest in this work is based on the most ostentatious form of feathered helmet, its origins lie in sculptural roots that were realised in small personal figures, such as Kapa (an image related to an aborted foetus) from Maui,[1] and several tall temple images from Maui that are now in the Bishop Museum.[2]

This figure is closely related to another that is now in the Musée du Quai Branly in Paris.[3] Both were carved in the same style, most likely by the same artist, but we do not know where they were used. Among the surviving Hawaiian figures are several apparent pairs, which have been separated and dispersed around the world.

It was given to the Temple Square Museum by King Kalākaua (1836–1891), the last reigning king of Hawai'i.

1 Ethnologisches Museum, Berlin, VI 8388.

2 Bishop Museum, Honolulu, D 2772 & D 2773, both from Maui.

3 Musée du Quai Branly, Paris, 71.1879.10.11.1. Donated to the collection of the Musée de l'Homme in 1877 by Théo Ballieu, French resident commissioner on Hawai'i. Rose (1978, pp 269–70) has found evidence that suggests the Paris figure was discovered in a cave on the lower slopes of Mauna Kea, Hawai'i, before 1877.

Rapa Nui (Easter Island)

RAPA NUI (EASTER ISLAND)

Rapa Nui (Easter Island) is a volcanic island populated by a people who were almost completely isolated from the rest of the world.

The language spoken on Rapa Nui was not fully transcribed until the twentieth century, and then not on the island itself. It is clearly a Polynesian language, most likely derived from the language of the Marquesas Islands, with links to Mangareva and also to the language spoken today on East Futuna in western Polynesia, 7000 kilometres to the west.[2]

There is evidence that Polynesian navigators made the return journey to locations in the Americas. The 1770 Spanish expedition that spent six days on Rapa Nui reported finding maize, manioc and white potato growing there, three cultigens of American origin.[3]

Surviving oral histories have Hotu Matu'a as the leader of the first fleet to Rapa Nui around 1200 years ago. They sailed to Rapa Nui Hiva from (probably) the Marquesas Islands across more than 3500 kilometres of open ocean, where the migrants established the first settlements. The island was covered in palm forest and surrounded by seas teeming with fish. People thrived.

About 500 years later they started building huge stone figures (*moai*) to honour the memory of their various clan leaders.[1] Eventually they created more than 800, many of them erected on stone platforms (*ahu*) on clan land, facing inland so that the ancestor figures could view the country where they once lived.

Rapa Nui is primarily known to the outside world for the huge stone *moai* that were transported 20 kilometres or more across the island. They appear to have been used as ancestor figures by the 'long-ear people', who were still in evidence when William Hodges, artist on Captain James Cook's second voyage, in 1774, sketched a man and a woman with long pierced earlobes. Were these distinctive ears a symbol of cultural identity, or associated with lineage and ancestry? While on the island of Tahuata in the Marquesas Islands, Hodges later sketched a chief of the island wearing large wooden 'ears',[4] clearly part of the attire of status. Given the number of links between Rapa Nui and the Marquesas Islands this 'big-ear' status link should not pass unnoticed.

The people of Rapa Nui are also known for their woodcarvings. A unique legacy of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and earlier, is a wide range of wood figures, such as the emaciated old man figures (*moai kavakava*), lizard-men (*moai moko*), and women with very flat bodies (*moai papa*). It has been argued[5] that these figures, in particular the *moai kavakava* and *moai papa*, could represent important ancestor spirits, a type of *akuaku*, and that the presence of an *akuaku* is 'embodied' in the sculpture.

Were the figures images of ancestor spirits, as in the story recorded by Katherine Routledge, and later by Thor Heyerdahl? It tells how Tu'u-ko-ihu, the leader who brought unity for a time to the people of the island, discovered two sleeping ghosts at the foot of the cliff in Puna Pau, the quarry where the people carved out the red stone crowns, called *pukau*, which were placed on the heads

of the stone *moai*. The ghosts had long ears, beards, long hooked noses and were so thin their ribs stood out on their chests. Tu'u-ko-ihu went home and carved their portraits in wood before he forgot what they looked like.[6]

Or was the presence or essence of the *akuaku* actually embedded in the sculpture, so that when the *moai kavakava* was transported to another country, the *akuaku* came with it?

We understand that *akuaku* is a generic term referring to a range of supernatural beings, some of them protector spirits, perhaps ancestral in origin. Some are associated with particular parts of the land, some with family caves. It is not clear whether the Rapa Nui of 200 years ago would have referred to *akuaku* as *atua*. Today, *atua* has positive connotations on Rapa Nui (lord, God, gentleman, respectable person) whereas *akuaku* represents the negative (evil spirits).[7]

Protector spirits are well known throughout the Pacific region. Several are thought to be directly associated with art objects and travel with the object anywhere in the world. There is a well-known figure from the Mortlock Islands, for example, a protector spirit that continues to stoutly defend its owners in their home in the United States.

Ovakevake, which was associated with Hiva, has been defined as the home of *akuaku* spirits:

> Some natives remember that old people told them that when the first missionaries arrived several *ákuáku* took their leave, saying that they were returning to *Hiva*, to *Ovakevake*. Another place where *ákuáku* supposedly lived before coming here was, according to the ancient belief, *Maru a Pó*, in Tahiti.[8]

This, and other definitions in a contemporary dictionary of Rapanui may provide more understanding about the relationship between Rapa Nui and the Marquesas Islands. For example, on Rapa Nui, there are two definitions for *tiki*:

- chief, boss, director, coordinator; expert, master in a craft, a science, or an art; *tiki rerorero kohau rogorogo*, rongorongo scribe; *tiki moai*, sculptor; *tiki ahu*, master builder who directs and coordinates the construction of ahu; *tiki îka*, master fisherman, professional fisherman
- ancient title, probably meaning 'grandmaster', used before the names of gods and semigods. Only vague memories remain today of *Tiki Makemake*, *Tiki Te Hatu*, *Tiki Hati*. It is said that the main one was *Tiki Makemake* and that *Tiki Hati* was the chief of a band of *akuaku*.

Today Make-Make is understood to be the main god and creator on Rapa Nui. It is clear here that the first definition of '*tiki*' on Rapa Nui is the same definition of *to'unga* on Rarotonga, and '*tohunga*' in Aotearoa New Zealand. The second definition may bring us closer to the use of the term on the Marquesas Islands, in particular Tiki Puaikanui.

1 See Van Tilburg 1994, pp 50–54 for a discussion of a four-phase cultural sequence.
2 See Langdon and Tryon 1983.
3 Langdon 1995.
4 Depicted in Joppien & Smith 1985, vol 2, p 206, fig 2.105.
5 Forment 1991, pp 7–12.
6 See Heyerdahl 1958, p 160.
7 See Englert 1993, dictionary.
8 ibid.

MOAI KAVAKAVA

Rapa Nui (Easter Island), eastern Polynesia
15th century
wood (*Sophora toromiro*), obsidian, bone, red ochre
43.6 cm

Musées Royaux d'Art et d'Histoire Bruxelles, ET 48.63

This figure epitomises the unique carved wood figures from Rapa Nui that are known as *moai kavakava*. *Moai* means 'carved image' and *kavakava*, which is literally 'men's ribs', is a more complex word associated with death and the spirit world. The essential element of a *moai kavakava* is an image of a gaunt old man, possibly someone who has recently died and is looking out into the spectral world he has joined. His eyes stare, his grinning mouth overlooked by a large hooked nose, a neatly groomed tuft of hair tops his jutting chin. On top of his head is a glyph, a raised image that is often of a human-like being with a beard.

This unforgettable image is as unique to Rapa Nui as the much larger stone *moai*. But why were the *moai kavakava* created? And how did they survive so long without damage? The wood of at least two figures (including this one) has been dated to around 600 years ago.[1] Most of the 140 known *moai kavakava* figures have all four limbs intact, and very few have sustained damage, although at least one has been repaired, most likely on Rapa Nui.[2]

In assuming that the legends about the origin of *moai kavakava* reflect something of the Rapa Nui of 600 years ago, we can understand a possible solution to the question of why these figures were first created. As part of the pacifiying or unifying process Tu'u-ko-ihu used when he 'civilised' the people of the island of Rapa Nui, he caused the creation of the *moai kavakava* and other wood objects to provide vehicles or physical locations for particular *akuaku* spirits.[3] In such an art object, each family or clan leader would be able to form a close relationship with an *akuaku* that was related to his particular family group. This art object, together with the presence of its associated *akuaku*, would be handed from generation to generation. Ownership and transfer of ownership of such significant ritual property is extremely important in every Polynesian society.

This association of an art object with an *akuaku* could be the reason that so many existing *moai kavakava* are in good condition. While there is little evidence about the Rapa Nui context of these figures, it is likely that they were wrapped carefully in tapa and, on occasion, suspended around the neck, most likely of a clan leader. Close physical and protective association between a clan leader and an art object would be natural if the art object were imbued with the presence of an *akuaku*.

1 Radiocarbon dating can estimate the date on which the measured carbon was laid down in the tree, but not the date that a sculptor created the work. Some scholars accept the radiocarbon date at face value in the case of these figures, noting that the toromiro shrub does not live much longer than 90 years, however, there is no evidence about the exact life span of *Sophora toromiro*. See Liller 1995 and Maunder 1999.

2 1886.154 at the National Museum of Ireland in Dublin has an indigenous repair to its foot (Forment 1991, p 40, fig 11b).

3 See Forment 1991, pp 6–10.

MOAI KAVAKAVA

Rapa Nui (Easter Island), eastern Polynesia
15th to early 19th century
wood, obsidian, bone
45.1 cm

Canterbury Museum, Christchurch, E 150.1135 (Oldman 1111)

The *moai kavakava* is a fantasy: an unearthly spectre, a ghost from the past that is more *atua* or image of an *atua*, than human. There is no consensus on the purpose of these figures and the debate ranges over whether they are ancestor images, or they were made to sell to Westerners; whether they are portraits or memorial figures and the earlier figures are images of deified ancestors; or they are a combination of the above.[1] In the early twentieth century, the people of Rapa Nui generally spoke of the figures with ribs as supernatural beings. There are several versions of the figures' origin story that were recorded in the early twentieth century.[2] In one, the creation of the first wooden statue is assigned to Tu'u-ko-ihu, a leader of legendary political strength who brought the people of Rapa Nui under his control perhaps around 600 years ago. A similar association between such a powerful figure and the creation of a new art tradition was also found on Rarotonga (pp 60–61).

Information recorded by Katherine Routledge in 1914 from the Rapa Nui man Tepano, in particular, indicates a strong link between these wood *moai kavakava* figures and *akuaku*, or spirit beings, whose presence was embodied in the sculpture.[3] The glyph on the crown of the figure's head may have been associated with a particular *akuaku*.[4]

The literal interpretation of the *moai kavakava* as images of starving men, which is based on the presence of exposed ribs, is simplistic. Exposed ribs are also depicted on *moai tangata moko* (lizard men) and a number of other figures of more fantastic form. It is more likely that the ribs and sunken belly were a reference to death. Almost all wood figures that are classed as *moai kavakava* depict at least one unearthly element, which is generally the ring at the base of the spine, and the ridged 'cage' around the hip region. In addition, one of the *moai kavakava* in this exhibition (p 176) has collarbones that terminate on top of the muscle region of the shoulder, rather than within the muscle, as is anatomically correct.

1 Routledge 1919, pp 270–71.

2 Forment (1991, p 7) refers to the versions recorded by Routledge (Easter Island Expedition 1913–1916), Metraux and Lavachery (recorded in 1934 during the Franco-Belgian field trip), and Englert (the version published in 1940).

3 ibid., p 10.

4 ibid., p 13.

MALE FIGURE

Rapa Nui (Easter Island), northern Polynesia
collected from Rapa Nui before 1826
wood
32 cm

Kunstkamera (Peter the Great Museum of Anthropology and Ethnology, Russian Academy of Sciences), St Petersburg, 736.203

This carving of a stooped old man, collected before 1826, exhibits several characteristics of *moai kavakava* (pp 176, 179),[1] including the ribs that are sketched into the wood, and his arms and hands, which lie by his sides.

Here the resemblance to *moai kavakava* ends. There is no glyph on top of its head and the ears are rudimentary stubs, rather than the extended lobes that are found on most *moai kavakava*. There is no tuft of hair at the end of an elongated chin. The torso lacks the small extension of the sternum under the ribs,[2] nor is there an exposed backbone or ring at its base. The fascinating rearrangement of the pelvis that is found on so many *moai kavakava* is not even considered on this piece. Was this the germ of a great idea, a prototype that developed into the masterpieces that we know today as *moai kavakava*, or a rough version of a *moai kavakava* made to sell to a passing sailor? If a work is the origin of a great series of instantly identifiable and desirable sculptures, it must precede the others, but there is no absolute evidence for the age of this piece.

There are at least 140 *moai kavakava* in museums and private collections around the world. Substantial research has been undertaken into their provenance, and that of other items that left Rapa Nui before 1860, the decade in which Christianity was introduced to the island and the last birdman ceremonies were held (p 191).[3] There is good documentation for 53 figures of a number of different types (including this one), and a further 19 figures have seemingly accurate documentation that cannot be confirmed.[4]

Those figures that travelled directly from Rapa Nui to a museum storeroom have maintained a singular purity when compared with those that have been kept in private collections, where their appearance has been altered by French polish or wax, or attempts to give them a more authentic 'patina' by stripping the surface and repainting it with watercolour, then covering it with wax.

The provenance of this figure is relatively unambiguous and allows us to raise the possibility that *moai kavakava* evolved over time. There is no means of dating the figure without damaging it, however, and its relationship to the others cannot be known.

1 *Moai kavakava* is a descriptive term that was first recorded in the early twentieth century (Routledge 1919, p 268).
2 Perhaps the xiphoid process, the cartilaginous section at the lower end of the sternum.
3 Kaeppler 2003, pp 10–69.
4 Much of the difficulty with Kaeppler's groupings lies in the definitions of 'solid' provenance and 'good documentation'.

MALE FIGURE

Rapa Nui (Easter Island), eastern Polynesia
18th century
wood
39.4 cm
David Attenborough, London

When they are placed side by side, it is easy to see the similarities and differences between the male and female figures from Rapa Nui that feature in Sir David Attenborough's documentary *The lost gods of Easter Island*.

Attenborough suggests that this figure might be an image of Make-Make, a god associated with the birdman cult. It is also possible that the two figures were a pair dating from the same period. We have accepted that the female figure, which is now in the Kunstkamera in St Petersburg, was most likely collected during the second voyage of Captain James Cook in 1772–1775 (p 186). The provenance of this male figure is less certain.

The most noticeable common element between the two is the big, closed-mouth smile, which is unknown on wood figures anywhere else in Polynesia. In both figures, the expression is stronger and more developed than a social smile and suggests perhaps the possibility of pleasure or even ecstasy. It is certainly not the rictus of death more usually associated with Rapa Nui wood figures.

The eyes, one each side of the face, have a lively reptilian quality in the bowl-like concave pupil set on a raised disc.

The artist of this male figure clearly had a creative mind and brilliantly combined abstract geometric forms to create a human face. The curve of the mouth extends to the top of the face where it becomes part of the upper eye socket, and eventually forms the curve of the eyebrows. The eye sits on the edge of this curve, halfway between the nostrils and ear.

Facial geometry aside, the eyebrows of this male figure are similar to those of the more numerous *moai kavakava* and lizard-men figures (*moai moko*). It also features a tuft of chin hair that is similar to that of the *moai kavakava*. The female figure, on the other hand, has neither eyebrow nor chin hair and is more humanly feminine. By contrast, the male looks distinctly other-worldly.

Both figures have a ridged coif on top of the head. The hair on the male figure is shown in detail, gathered at the back of the head then pulled forward and secured with a 'clip' in the shape of a glyph of two eyes and a mouth that resembles an octopus.[1] The coif then tumbles forward and becomes the figure's nose.

The figure's right hand drapes across the belly, just reaching up to touch the edge of the exposed rib cage. The left hand on the lower abdomen reaches down to his penis. The placement of these long tapering fingers is more typically characteristic of the female *moai papa* wood figures (p 189). Almost all male *moai kavakava* have short stubby fingers held at their sides. In this case, however, the artist plays with gender: the figure has the exposed ribs and backbone that are hallmarks of the male *moai kavakava*, but there is also a feminine element in the fingers and their placement.

Some of the great stone *moai* of Rapa Nui have elongated fingers positioned each side of the loincloth (*hami*) over the pubic region. The *hami* was a sign of an *ariki*, an aristocrat.[2]

The overall shape of the figure is like that of a dried leaf floating through the air, on its way to another world, slightly curled, but not yet brittle.

Is this an image of the god Make-Make?

There is no evidence that the traditional Polynesian gods—such as Tu, Tangaroa, Rongo, or Tane—were used in rituals on Rapa Nui. There are, however, associations in the genealogies of the aristocrats, especially of the ruling Miru clan, which reference the *atua* Tongaroa as an ancestor two generations before Hotu Matu'a, the founding leader of the Polynesian-speaking people of Rapa Nui.[3]

The presence of Make-Make as a god, an *atua*, on Rapa Nui, was a local development that was based on sound Polynesian traditions. The story associated with the birdman traditions is that Make-Make was born in the sea from a skull belonging to an old woman priestess of Ahu Tongariki.[4] This association of human remains with a supernatural being recalls practices in which the *vairua* spirit of a human is captured in an art object or canoe and used to animate that object.[5] The essential point is that a *vairua* needs a home, something to occupy, once it has left a human body. If this is the case, then Make-Make most likely had a physical object to inhabit during his incarnation as a deified *vairua*.

Most known images of the birdman feature a bird's head on a human body. Make-Make, however, is not the birdman, and the known images of Make-Make depict a human-like head.[6]

Make-Make had a companion and friend, a spirit (probably an *akuaku*) known as Haua.[7] Both were married. Make-Make's wife was known as Vie Kenatea, and Haua's wife was Vie Hoa. All four were gods in the birdman ritual. It is probable that Make-Make's wife was an *akuaku*.

The birdman ritual was operating at least by 1770, when it was recorded by the Spanish captain Don Filipe González.[8] Assuming Make-Make was a *vairua* and housed in a portable art object, we cannot rule out Attenborough's proposition that this figure was an image of, or even a repository for, Make-Make, Rapa Nui's only god.

1 A related glyph is sketched in Orliac & Orliac (2008, p 110, fig 64, no 21), but does not state to which *moai kavakava* it belongs.

2 In Van Tilburg (1994, pp 134–35), the author discusses the long fingers and the pubic cover, which are clarified in drawings by Cristián Arévalo Pakarati (p 2; 53, fig 36; 102, fig 74; 119, fig 92; 130, fig 99). A clear photograph from Katherine Routledge's archive of a stone *moai* with this style of finger each side of the *hami* is shown in Van Tilburg 2003 (pl p 14, top r).

3 Van Tilburg 1994, p 87, fig 64, after Métraux 1940.

4 Van Tilburg 1994, p 55, referring to Métraux 1940, pp 311–14.

5 See introductory essay *Sacred art from Polynesia: 'the view from the interior'.*

6 An image of Make-Make was drawn by Weisser from the image in a stone house at Rano Kau and published in Geiseler (1880 (1995), p 46, fig 23).

7 Recorded as Hawa-tuu-také-aké in Routledge.

8 González & Bolton 1908 illustrates opposite p. 48 the signatures of chiefs of Easter Island to the Spanish Treaty, 1770. One of the signatures took the form of an outline of a bird-like being with four limbs, which could be interpreted as the image of a birdman.

FEMALE FIGURE

Rapa Nui (Easter Island), eastern Polynesia
collected during the second voyage of Captain James Cook, 1774
wood
52 cm

Kunstkamera (Peter the Great Museum of Anthropology and Ethnology, Russian Academy of Sciences), St Petersburg, 736.205

This unique figure from Rapa Nui has strong artistic affinities with an equally unique male figure (p 182) that is owned by Sir David Attenborough and featured in his documentary *The lost gods of Easter Island.* Attenborough has suggested that his figure might be an image of Make-Make, the well-known *atua* from Rapa Nui associated with the birdman cult. This smiling figure could be the wife, mother or daughter of Make-Make. It may, however, be a repository for another *atua* altogether, an *akuaku* spirit being, and the link with Attenborough's figure might be the that of a unique artist branching out on his own.

What makes this figure female? There are no signs of genitalia, and nor is there evidence of the figure having been mutilated to obscure genitals. In this it is reminiscent of the figures produced on Hawai'i, very few of which possess genitalia, probably because *atua*, lacking physical bodies, do not need to reproduce.

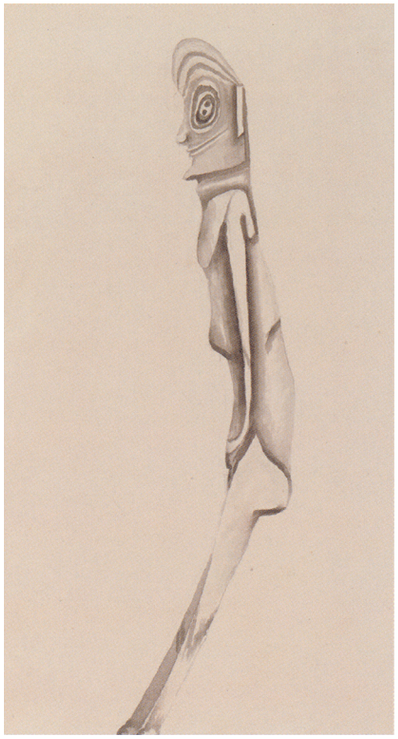
The figure's long tapering fingers, worn away to almost nothing, reach down the body to where the genitalia would be. All of the known female figures from Rapa Nui have long tapering fingers, one hand on the chest, the other reaching towards the vulva. Male figures, by contrast, were always shown with comparatively short stubby fingers positioned at the sides of the thighs (Attenborough's figure excepted).

We look at this figure with the hair brushed forward and very broad smile and wonder whether Attenborough is correct, that this is a special class of being, an aristocrat in the spirit world, the wife of Make-Make himself. The figure probably dates from before Captain James Cook's second voyage, for it was sketched, most likely by Henry Roberts, draughtsman during Cook's second voyage.[1]

Was the smile the natural state of women before contact with the outside world? By 1862 the people of Rapa Nui had been reduced to virtual slavery, devastated by disease, herded into a corner of their island, and the remainder kidnapped to work on the guano islands off Peru. No wonder the other female figures look so grim.

Perhaps this is a depiction of Make-Make's wife, a portrait of a free and happy woman in the mid-to-late eighteenth century. Or perhaps she is an image of an *akuaku* spirit being.

1 Several authors, including Attenborough, have attributed the pen and wash drawings of an 'unidentified artist' to Henry Roberts, draughtsman during Cook's second voyage. The works are reproduced in Joppien & Smith (1985, vol 2, p 264, no 2. M20).



(bottom left) Detail of *Three native idols* from Vol. 6 of *Original Sketches, Drawings, Maps etc Collected by Admiral Isaac Smith / drawings and watercolours, mainly of Captain Cook's Second Voyage (1772–1775)* by William Hodges, Henry Roberts, etc. Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales
SAFE / PXD 11

FEMALE FIGURE (*MOAI PAPA*)

Rapa Nui (Easter Island), eastern Polynesia
probably early 19th century
wood, bone, obsidian
64 cm

Otago Museum, Dunedin, O 50.051.1

There are multiple interpretations of the female, flat-bodied, wood figures from Rapa Nui that are known as *moai papa* or *moai pa'a-pa'a* (*moai* refers to 'carved object' and *papa* to the flatness of the figures). They all depict unhappy women, for none are smiling, except for the female figure from the St Petersburg collection (p 187) who was created in a different art style or tradition. All feature a carved pattern (glyph) on the top of the head, and a ring or disc shape near the base of the spine.

There are at least 20 of these female figures known and they are clearly related to the presumably equivalent male figures (*moai kavakava*). It is not known whether the male and female figures were created at the same time or period.

Several different styles were used to depict female images, but the flat-bodied *moai papa* has the most character, and is certainly the most poignant. While the glyph on top of the head could be mistaken for a hairstyle, it is in fact one of several glyphs that were carved into the heads of these female figures.

The range of head-glyph styles has yet to be comprehensively identified and nor has there been a thorough comparison between the motifs on female figures and their similarity to those on male figures.

Features that are common to *moai papa* and *moai kavakava*, however, include:

- glyph on top of the head
- thick eyebrows
- technique for depicting eyes
- clearly depicted collarbone
- tuft or goatee at the end of the chin
- elevated upper hip line that flows around the body and down the centre-line of each leg
- ring or disc-like shape in the middle of the lower back.

The features of *kavakava* that are not found on female figures, apart from the clearly male features, such as the penis, are:

- exposed ribs
- exposed backbone
- elongated ear lobes.

Both female and male figures have a tuft or 'goatee' on the chin, but that of the female is not textured while the male figures have four or five curved lines to give texture and a hair-like quality to the shape.

The female figures have long elegant fingers with the left hand reaching down to their pubic region and the right hand lying across the belly. Male *kavakava* have much shorter fingers held at the side of the body.

(left) Centre detail of *Three native idols* from Vol. 6 of *Original Sketches, Drawings, Maps etc Collected by Admiral Isaac Smith/ drawings and watercolours, mainly of Captain Cook's Second Voyage (1772–1775)* by William Hodges, Henry Roberts, etc.
Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales
SAFE / PXD 11

BIRDMAN

Rapa Nui (Easter Island), eastern Polynesia
before 1826
wood
33.5 cm

Kunstkamera (Peter the Great Museum of Anthropology and Ethnology, Russian Academy of Sciences), St Petersburg, 736.204

The master artist who created this work successfully achieved the difficult task of combining elements of human and bird forms. However, the resulting figure has attributes that are more like those found on a *moai kavakava* than on a human, including exposed ribs, exposed backbone, and a fan beneath a knob at the base of the spine.

Bird elements include the beak, which seems to grow from where a mouth might have been. The end of the beak is hooked and the edges of the beak are serrated. A human nose protrudes above the beak from which it is separated by two ridges. Thick bushy eyebrows, *kavakava* style, arch over the eyes and curve down to the jawline. The posture is more human or *kavakava* than bird, and human legs complete the picture.

There are 11 'birdman' wood figures known from Rapa Nui. At one end of the spectrum is this figure, with its synthesis of bird and *moai kavakava* characteristics. At the other end is a figure of a man wearing a bird mask and costume.[1] This range suggests that there was no fully developed or established tradition for these figures. Instead, the idea of trying to create such a figure appealed to a number of artists who explored the idea in their own way. The elements that are common to most of these figures include the human posture and a bird head on a human body. Occasionally a human head was created on a bird's body.

These birdmen were not associated with people wanting to fly. Close study of these 11 figures reveals that there was no intention to create a figure that gave the appearance of flight or flying. All the figures that have been identified as birdmen are depicted with the wings, which usually look more like flippers, folded at the back.

There are also wide variations in the beaks and only two have been found with the hooked beak of this figure. Others are straight beaked, some with a tongue. One has the short beak of a seed-eater.

It has been suggested that these figures are images of the *atua* Make-Make, however, it is more likely that they are explorations of an idea, a fantasy, of which this example is the most successful.

This figure was likely to have been acquired through barter by Mahine,[2] the youth from Bora-Bora in the Society Islands who travelled with Captain James Cook to Rapa Nui in 1774. On returning to Tahiti after the five-week return voyage, Mahine probably gave it to one of his relatives. The figure eventually reached Russia before 1826, probably with Admiral Fabian von Bellingshausen, who visited Tahiti in 1820, or perhaps via Russian engineer LS Waxel, who gave objects from his travels to the Imperial Academy of Sciences when he returned to St Petersburg in 1809.

1 British Museum, London, Oc1928,0517.1.

2 Also known as Odeidee by Hodges (*Oedidee, Otaheite* c 1775, National Library of Australia, Canberra, Pic.2717036, a drawing in red chalk of Mahine). Hitihiti is another name recorded for Mahine (see Newell 2005).

BIRD COVERED WITH *KOMARI* SYMBOLS

Rapa Nui (Easter Island), eastern Polynesia
probably 18th or early 19th century
wood
37 cm

British Museum, London, Oc1950,04.12

It is most likely that this bird figure depicts the frigate bird,[1] a significant symbol in Rapa Nui and over much of the Pacific region. It is covered with 40 *komari*, each reminiscent of vulva, for many understand the view that *komari* are symbols of women's genitalia.

The three-lobed *komari* symbol was engraved on rock surfaces and painted on rock walls, portable stone objects, and even several wood figures. The largest *komari* known on Rapa Nui is 130 centimetres long and engraved into the surface of a *paenga* (stone foundation, probably for a house).[2] At least 560 carved *komari* symbols have been found, the majority in and around the major ritual site at Orongo on the south-western tip of the island.

It is clear that *komari* are symbols or icons, but it is not known whether they were religious icons or symbols of a change in ideology or politics. On Rapa Nui, they often overlay other symbols, but not randomly. Was the *komari* the symbol of a secret cult or secret society? It has been noted that the glyph *hare* closely resembles the *komari* symbol found on this bird and on rock engravings. *Hare* means house, family or clan. In this interpretation, the bird might be covered with 40 *hare*, symbolising clans, perhaps all the clans existing at a particular time. This interpretation is not as seductive as *komari* representing vulva, but it makes more sense when compared with other eastern Polynesian societies, with their emphasis on ancestry and hierarchy.

The British Museum's register entry notes 'bird god (Make Make) covered with Komari. God of fecundity', although the source of this attribution is not documented. Make-Make is an *atua* (*etua* on Rapa Nui) who is associated with the origin of humans as a result of sexual relations with the natural world. This echoes a similar creator being known elsewhere in Polynesia as Tiki (p 102). Make-Make the *atua* is also known in the Marquesas Islands, so this *atua* probably originates in the time of Hotu Matu'a, the originate 'king' of Rapa Nui and leader of the first settlers.

1 Of all the birds known from Rapa Nui, the Great Frigatebird (*Fregata minor)* has a beak most like the beak of this figure. It is known as *makohe* on Rapa Nui.

2 Van Tilburg 1994, p 58, fig 41.

LIZARD MAN (*MOAI MOKO*)

Rapa Nui (Easter Island), eastern Polynesia
early 19th century or before
wood, obsidian, bone
37.5 cm
Musées Royaux d'Art et d'Histoire, Bruxelles, ET 45.51

This *moai moko* could be considered the most complete realisation of the lizard man idea, created in the most elegant way and with flawless command of the artist's tools.

It is the subtle details that help make this figure so exceptional—the glyph on top of the head, the *komari* symbol under the jaw, the double fishhook marks in front of the nose, the liveliness of the image. The bristling eyebrows, created from chevrons, separate the eyes from the bulge of the head. Behind the head, the neck is encircled with flowing chevrons, giving the figure the appearance of movement.

The knees, pushed forward, and the arms, reaching forward under the body and under the head, give the impression that the figure is stealthily inching forward. The gentle arch of the body, forwards and to the left, suggest that it is tracking its prey. The exposed backbone, the ring and fan show its supernatural side, its link with the *moai kavakava*, the connection to the world of *akuaku*.

LIZARD MAN (*MOAI MOKO*)

Rapa Nui (Easter Island), eastern Polynesia
early 19th century or before
wood
30 cm

National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, 2013.4090

Commonly known as a lizard man, this beautifully balanced work is based on a blend of lizard and human physical characteristics. There are 65 known *moai moko* (lizard man figures) in collections around the world. This figure is an eloquent expression of the type. From the side the head is lizard-like, except for the bulge of the head, the bristling eyebrows, and the mouth that curls around to become the ears. Further down the body, the lizard becomes more other-worldly, more *moai kavakava* than human. In particular, the exposed ribs and backbone, and the ring and fan near the base of the spine, are neither human nor lizard characteristics, but are found on *moai kavakava*.

On the underside, the arms reach forward and the elongated fingers and thumb of each hand curve out under the rear of the jaw. An image of a multi-armed being, possibly an octopus or squid, is carved in relief in front of the fingers.

It is clear that, despite first impressions, the *moai moko* is an image of neither a man nor lizard, nor even a combination of both. Instead, it is much more closely allied to the *moai kavakava*.

The concept underlying lizard men is ancient in Polynesia, and may date back more than 1000 years. It is found in Hawai'i, thousands of kilometres to the north-west, where a related concept (lizard woman) is known as *Kiha-wahine*. In Hawai'i, all lizards—*moko* (pronounced *mo'o* in Hawaiian)—are known as bodies or manifestations of the legendary Kiha Wahine, who was a *moko* in human female form.[1] *Moko* in Hawai'i were an ancient line of *atua*[2] who inhabited waterfalls, springs, streams and fishponds.

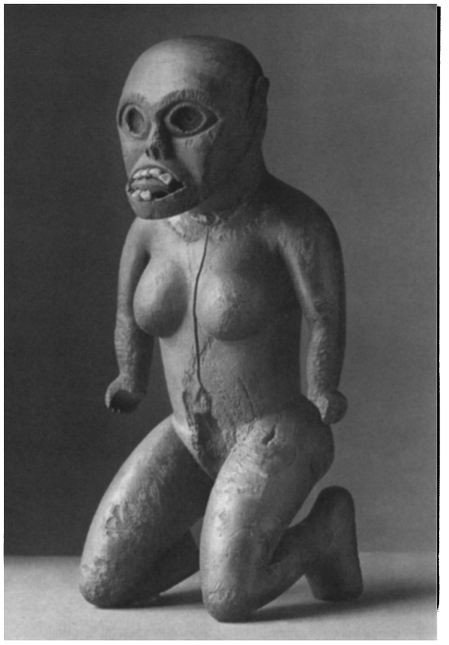
Another manifestation of the *moko*, the *taniwha*, is found in Aotearoa New Zealand and shares many of the characteristics of the Hawaiian *mo'o*, being reptilian, associated with water, and threatening or even dangerous to humans.

Wooden images of *moko* are known from both Hawai'i and Rapa Nui, but there do not appear to be wood images of *taniwha*. Part of the problem could be that *moko* as *atua* have a number of manifestations—the well-documented figure of Kiha Wahine is that of a human woman—and it may well be that other figures are also manifestations of *moko*, but knowledge of the link has been lost. *Taniwha* as *atua* also have other manifestations, but it is not known if any Maori wood images are of these manifestations.

As *moko* and *taniwha* can be found in both Hawai'i and Aotearoa New Zealand, it is clear that the concept and the *atua* are more than 800 years old.

1 A wood figure of Kiha Wahine is now in the Ethnologisches Museum, Berlin (VI 8375). In 1885 this figure, and a feathered wood image of the *akua* Kamehai Kana, was taken from a cave off the rocky coast close to Hamakua near Laupahoehoeiki, on the Big Island of Hawai'i.

2 Prounced *akua* in Hawaiian.



Kiha Wahine, a *moko* from Hawai'i. Hewicker & Tischner 1954 nr 89. Ethnologisches Museum, Berlin Ethnologisches Museum, Berlin VI 8375

MALE BARK CLOTH FIGURE

Rapa Nui (Easter Island), eastern Polynesia
before 1840
bark cloth, wickerwork frame, paint
48 cm

Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 70/53542

It is clear that the artist who created this figure also created the other, closely related figure (p 201) in this exhibition, for they share many subtle aspects of their construction. The painted symbols are also closely related, including the tattoo marks that are depicted on the neck and which most likely indicate both figures were images of a chief, or of a man and woman of chiefly lineage.[1]

This clearly male figure has three hafted obsidian knives or blades (*mata'a*) painted on his body, one pointing up, two down.

Unlike the other figure, this figure does not appear to have had his arms and legs bound together. Nor does he carry the symbol that is commonly known as *komari* (vulva), but which can also be interpreted as *hare* (house, clan).

It is significant that the navel is not depicted on either figure.

Only three such figures are known, all of similar size. The third, also at the Peabody Museum in Harvard, was made by another artist using different construction techniques; stripes have been depicted over its head, and no sex is shown.

Two instances have been recorded of eighteenth- or nineteenth-century Rapa Nui people using images that were not made from stone or wood. In 1770 the Spanish saw some Rapa Nui people erect a figure that was over three metres high and stuffed with straw, then sit around it and sing all night by the light of flares.[2]

The name the Spanish recorded for this figure was '*copeca*', now spelled *kopeka*, meaning 'cross' (as in cross-legged), 'revenge' or 'vengeance'.[3] The word and associated set of meanings is widespread across eastern Polynesia.

The painted images of obsidian blades suggest that the two figures could have been associated with revenge. The blades could also signify sacrifice, or represent the weapons of a warrior culture.

The figure was acquired in 1899[4] and may date from the 1840s.[5]

1 See Hiquily in Peltier (2009 p 12) for a description of similar markings that were tattooed on a chief during his adolescent initiation on the island of Mangareva.
2 Referred to in Van Tilburg 1994, p 84.
3 In Corney 1967, p 95.
4 Gift of the David Kimball heirs, 1899; previously in the Boston Museum.
5 Kaeppler 2003, p 38.

BARK CLOTH FIGURE

Rapa Nui (Easter Island), eastern Polynesia
before 1843
bark cloth, wickerwork frame, paint
47.5 cm

National Museums of Northern Ireland, Belfast, 1910.41

At first sight this frail little figure looks like a baby learning to sit up, but closer inspection soon dispels this impression.

The figure's natural position suggests that its arms were once bound to the legs.

Some of the markings that are painted on the body are similar to depictions of tattoos.[1] There are images of obsidian knives or blades on each shoulder and hip joint. In the centre of its chest, between two images of obsidian blades, perhaps representing something hanging from the neck, is a painted symbol that is generally thought to be a *komari* (vulva), but could also interpreted as *hare* (house, clan).

Without doubt this figure was created by the artist who made the male figure (p 198) that is now in the Peabody Museum, Harvard University, even through their histories are different. This figure was collected by Gordon Augustus Thomson in 1839 or 1840, probably when he was in Hawai'i.[2] The male figure at the Peabody was acquired in 1899.

The technique used for the construction of both figures is similar, including the eyes, which were made separately and attached tightly to the frame, the bark cloth (*tapa*) teeth, and the body paint—in particular the obsidian knife design that is painted on the surface of the bark cloth.

The skeletal, almost mummified, appearance of the two figures could be the result of the materials used, in particular the bark cloth, which is dry and thus gives the skin the quality of parchment.

Their lifelike appearance is the result of the artist's method of construction, beginning with the cane frame that was used to represent the most visible bones of the face and body. A cane 'bone' was lashed to the frame and forms the basis of the head and a ridge for the eyebrows. The frame extends around the head and acts as the base for the ears and the framework for the nose; an additional, padded cane 'bone' runs under the eyes, the nose and above the mouth, and provides structural support. The nose has small cane wings over which string is tied to depict the septum.

The artist constructed the face from many small pieces of bark cloth sewn together; for example, the mouth is a separate piece of bark cloth that was tied or knotted to create teeth. The cloth successfully captures the soft plumpness of the skin under the chin and the subtle curves of the neck.

Two small breasts, or nipples, are clearly depicted. Although it is likely that this figure was created as a female, the evidence is hidden inside the *maro* (loin cloth) that wraps around the body. Nipples are not a defining feature of femininity in Polynesian sculpture, and this figure's definitely male counterpart at the Peabody also has nipples.

Once the figure's wickerwork and bark cloth body was completed, it was painted with at least two colours. The face was painted in six separate stages:

- a large round pupil was painted in black
- two black lines painted on the outer edge of the nostril create a 'wing' shape
- many small black lines depict vertical creases on the lips
- orange ochre was smeared around the outer part of the mouth, with visible traces at the bridge of the nose near the eyes
- four black lines depict long eyebrows
- small black dots run between the eyes and ears then down to the hinge of the chin
- broad black lines, possibly representing tattoos, run under the chin and down the neck. They are visible at the front and side of the neck.

The shoulders and upper arms have several lines of round dots that are also likely to represent tattoo marks.

At the shoulder and hip joints are distinctive depictions of an obsidian knife or blade. The two blades near the groin are joined to a haft and it is not clear whether those near the junction of the arms and shoulders are similarly attached. The ears are red cloth, with two copper or bronze objects in their interiors.[3]

1 The vertical angled markings on her neck are similar to those described from Mangareva in which a future chief, who lived as a recluse in the mountains throughout his childhood, received tattoos on the neck as part of his initiation into adolescence. See Hiquily in Peltier 2009, p 12.

2 Kaeppler 2003, p 35.

3 Kaeppler 2003, p 35.

UA STAFF

Rapa Nui (Easter Island), eastern Polynesia
probably 18th century or earlier
wood (most likely *Thespesia populnea*; known as *makoi* on Rapa Nui, *miro* in many other places in eastern Polynesia)
120 cm

National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, 2012.1800

All *ua* staffs from Rapa Nui are superficially similar to each other. The horizontally incised lines representing a bouffant hair style connect the two faces on the front and reverse of the staff. The eyes are set with obsidian and ringed with hollow bird bone; the outer edge of each eye is joined to a long, thin pierced ear on the side of the head. Between the eyes and above the nose is a slight ridge. The long, naturalistic nose has small nostril holes drilled underneath. Bulbous cheeks or cheekbones on each side of the face resemble pendulous bags under the eyes. The mouth protrudes slightly, with no trace of teeth and there is no chin. The staff concludes as a smooth and beautifully finished blade.

The slight and rhythmic ripples on the surface of the wood of this *ua* are characteristic of growth patterns that are emphasised by reducing the surface with stone tools. The surface looks more like skin than wood. Most of the shaft is dully iridescent and covered in fine scratches, except around the neck region where it was held by human hands. Although the 'stripes' of the wood are horizontal, the surface is covered with fine vertical lines, which are possibly due to the wood having dried out as it aged. The 'foot' or base of the *ua* is perfectly rounded with no evidence of abrasion, suggesting it might have been 'corrected' by a previous owner.

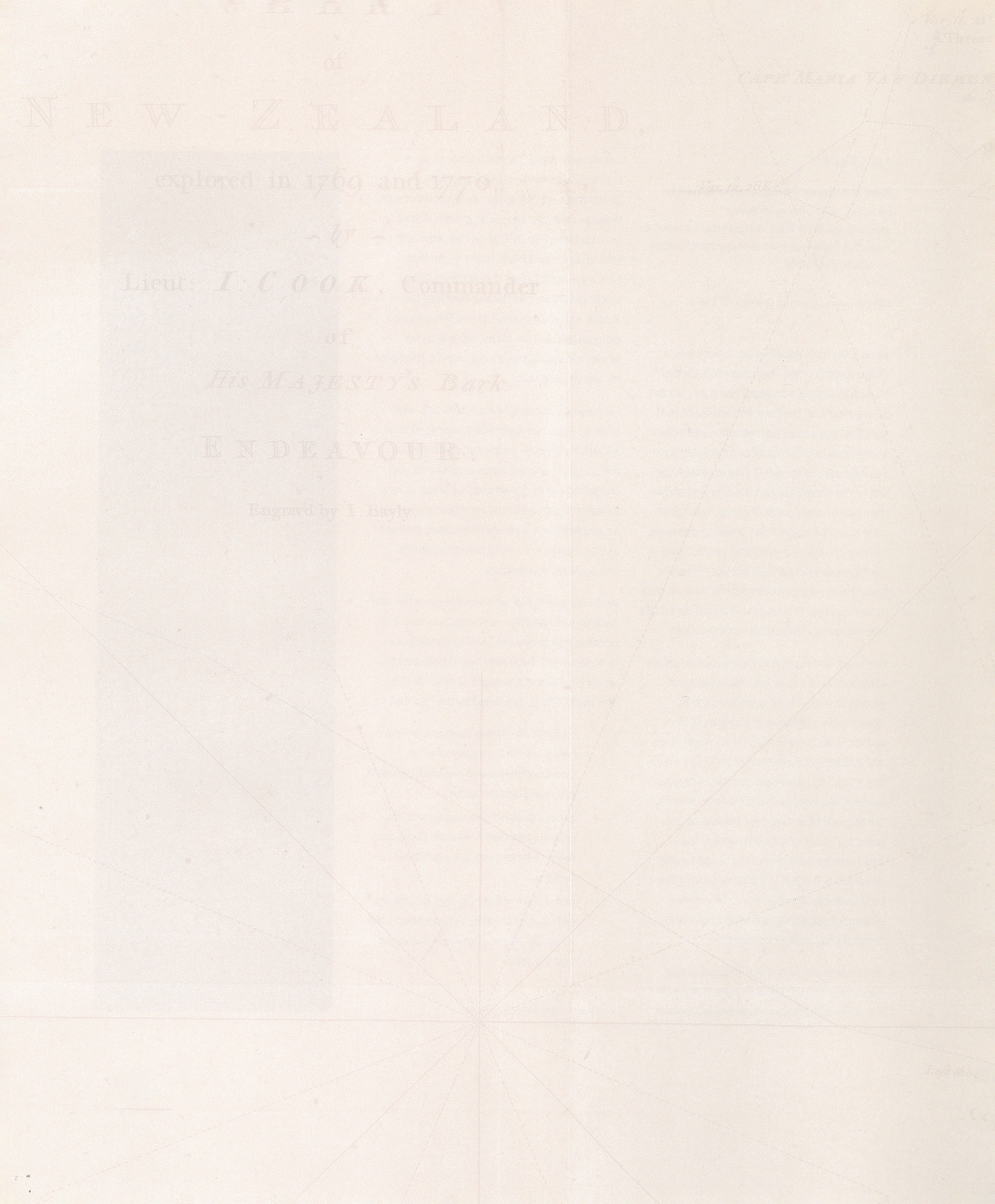
The section above the eye and below the eyebrow—technically, the lower surface of the supraorbital torus—is extended to form a horizontal plane. This distinctive feature is shared with many stone *moai*.[1] A New Zealand variant of this feature is a characteristic feature of the '*tiki*'-type face, as seen on the 'god stick' Maru (p 219) or on the prow of the fishing canoe (p 210). In many eighteenth-century Maori objects, this horizontal plane is split in two so that the the forehead forms a peak, rather like a ship's prow. This greatly exaggerated feature might represent the faculty for seeing, visualising, or even the sense for recognising *atua*.

Ua means 'two sides'. The *ua* staffs that were used on Rapa Nui most likely originated in an ancient Polynesian art form that resulted in the *u'u* club from the Marquesas Islands and the *taiaha* fighting staff used by Maori in New Zealand. The three forms are characterised by a head with two faces and were used primarily as status objects to demonstrate authority, and as potential weapons.

While knowledge of *ua* was lost before the oral traditions of Rapa Nui were documented, it is possible that they were used to contact *atua* or to represent the liminal world between this world (Te Ao) and the world of *atua* (Te Po). This possibility is supported by the fact that:

- on Tahiti the *ti'i* was used as a liminal being, on the boundary of lands, between the sea and the land, between this world and the other
- in New Zealand, *tiki* images, with this greatly extended horizontal plane, also seem to have been used as liminal beings
- rather than merely signifying authority, the *ua* might signify, or have been used to signify, the link between this world and the *atua*.

1 Orliac & Orliac 2008, p 156, fig 98.


of
NEW-ZEALAND,
explored in 1769 and 1770,
by
Lieut: J: COOK, Commander
of
His MAJESTY'S Bark
ENDEAVOUR,
Engravd by I. Bayly

Aotearoa New Zealand

AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND

People reached the remote island group of Aotearoa New Zealand around 700 to 750 years ago (1250–1300 AD). Wairau Bar, facing Cook Strait on the north-east coast of the South Island, is the earliest known settlement. The immigrants came from many places in the eastern regions of central Polynesia, including the Cook Islands, Austral Islands, Tahiti and the Society Islands, and the Marquesas Islands. They most likely sailed west to Samoa, then south along the whale migration route that follows the Kermadec Trench and passes near Kaikoura, which is about 100 kilometres by land from Wairau. The ocean between Samoa and central Polynesia was well known to the Polynesian navigators and had been thoroughly explored by the thirteenth century. Although whales were a danger to long-distance, double-hulled sailing canoes, their returning presence would have indicated it was worth following their migration routes.[1]

Oral traditions in Aotearoa New Zealand and central Polynesia speak of many voyages. Once the first return voyage had been successfully undertaken—3500 kilometres each way between Samoa and Kaikoura, and an additional 2000 kilometres to Tahiti—navigators shared their knowledge and, for at least 100 years, dozens of return voyages took place.

Early Aotearoa New Zealand was a migrant world, with at least five different Polynesian languages, cultures and art traditions. The new world was very different from the fertile and overpopulated islands of Rarotonga, Tahiti, and the Marquesas. This new land was huge and comparatively cold, with few edible root crops. Fish and birds were abundant, at least in the early years.

Eventually art styles evolved from their central Polynesian origins to form a distinct New Zealand identity. Regional variants appeared and great artists were in demand, travelling long distances to work for members of the influential aristocracy. The Maori art style, as we know it today, did not exist until around 1500, when there appears to have been a unification of the primary art style.

Within a few hundred years, Maori society in New Zealand changed from that of an opportunistic hunter-gatherer people (moa hunters) with a low population base, to an evolved warrior society of people living in fortified villages, with gardening as their main source of sustenance. Their ritual and religious world developed rapidly, integrating many of the variations derived from central Polynesia. Priests had brought *atua* with them, loaded in their canoes, and major *atua* from central Polynesia—including Tane, Tangaroa, Tu, Rongo, Maru, and Kahukura—became established in New Zealand.

The migrants brought with them an earlier version of the sacred enclosures that was prevalent throughout what is now known as the Polynesian Archaic Phase—when the major long-distance voyages were still occurring. The western Polynesian concept of *marae* as a village meeting place was retained and the much larger paved *marae* with sacred enclosure, so prevalent in eastern Polynesia at the end of the eighteenth century, was developed after the main migrations to New Zealand and was not brought there.

The earlier version of the sacred enclosure, which was used throughout Polynesia in the Archaic Phase, was known as the *tuahu*. Unlike later development of the eastern Polynesian sacred enclosure, which was much larger, the *tuahu* was more a repository for sacred discards, food not eaten by a *tapu* priest, or hair cut from a sacred person.[2] *Tuahu* were often described as a fenced mound.[3] A *tuahu* could even be part of a canoe, although more generally it was located outside a settlement. In the case of a fortress (a fortified *pa*), one *tuahu* would be inside the walls for use during times of siege and another outside for peaceful times.

A *tuahu* was one of the first things to be built in a new settlement and was regarded as a claim to land ownership. A carved pole (*pou*) would often be erected on the ground and sacred items, such as carved wooden boxes (*waka*), were kept there. In some villages, stone fertility images were stored in the *tuahu* and taken into the fields during planting of sweet potato (*kumara*).

Atua associated with the *tuahu* were most likely deified ancestors. Elsdon Best spoke of four erected stones in a *tuahu* or *wahi tapu* (sacred place) at Hauraki near the ancient *pa* called Puhirua, Rotorua. They were owned by the Arawa people that represented the *atua* Maru-te-whare-aitu, Rongomai, Ihungaru and Itupawa. Religious ceremonies were performed here by the priest and the gods were placated by *karakia* (chants, prayers) and offerings.[4]

Offerings in Aotearoa New Zealand were limited to foodstuffs, such as dogs or fish. The bloodthirsty side to the *atua* of the large islands of central Polynesia was most likely a later development and was not practised in New Zealand.

An instance of a people and their relationship to an *atua* was recorded from the east coast of the South Island, near a place now known as Waikouaiti.[5] About the year 1770, Te Wera, a widely known warrior chief, held his fortified town on a peninsula that was very difficult to access. His *atua* was Kahukura, a deified ancestor who originated in central Polynesia. Kahukura's carved and tattooed wooden image was located in a sacred *tuahu*, raised up so everyone could see him. One night, after a long seige, two daring young enemy warriors landed near the cliffs of the peninsula, climbed up through a difficult passage, got into Te Wera's fortress and stole Kahukura's image.

Next morning, the priest awoke to find his charge gone. On the other side of the palisades Te Wera's enemies were laughing, taunting Kahukura's image. The priest and his colleagues at the *tuahu* kindled a sacred fire and, with intense concentration, they began to work their *karakia*, their prayers and magic spells. They asked Kahukura to help them regain their image. To everyone's amazement, the *atua* was torn from the hands of the enemy priest and flew back to his own *tuahu* in Te Wera's fortress.

The social distinctions that came with the central Polynesian immigrants were maintained in Aotearoa New Zealand. Aristocrats were descended from gods and divinity was everything to

them. The first born of the first born of the first born held the greatest power—political and divine—because the gods controlled the land and the people through their closest descendants. For the aristocrats, ancestry was everything—the source of their power. Aristocrats administered the land and the people on behalf of their ancestor gods, and commissioned art works that were visual manifestations of their power. These included the large sea-going canoes which the aristocrats used to visit each other and to raid other people. They also built ancestor-focused community houses, known today as the meeting house, or *whare nui*. Large memorials made from retired and upended canoes were constructed to honour particular ancestors. As fortification became more widespread, ancestor memorials became gateways, and ancestor figures were incorporated into the palisades.

Prestige objects, such as elegantly carved canoe bailers, were the property of sea-going aristocrats. Many members of the upper class owned beautifully decorated personal treasure boxes, generally known today as *waka huia* or *papahou*. Bird perches and weapons were also exquisitely carved and decorated.

Storehouses, owned by the aristocracy on behalf of their people, were decorated with powerful carved imagery, sometimes ancestors, more often images of the entrance to Te Po, which Westerners understand as death, or perhaps, the afterlife. *Atua*, such as Maru and Kahukura, maintained their links with their central Polynesian homelands, while others appear to have originated within New Zealand.

Personal *atua*, such as those associated with the fertility of crops and fishing, were also maintained and, at the end of the pre-Christian era, several *kumara* 'gods' were collected and given to museums around the country.

By the late-eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, Maori society underwent major changes wrought by Western colonisation. Many art objects were sold or given away and ancestor images were abandoned. In 1901, the New Zealand parliament passed legislation intended to stem the loss of 'Maori antiquities'. The *Protected Objects Act* 1975 is the most recent legislative attempt to prevent Maori cultural property from leaving New Zealand.

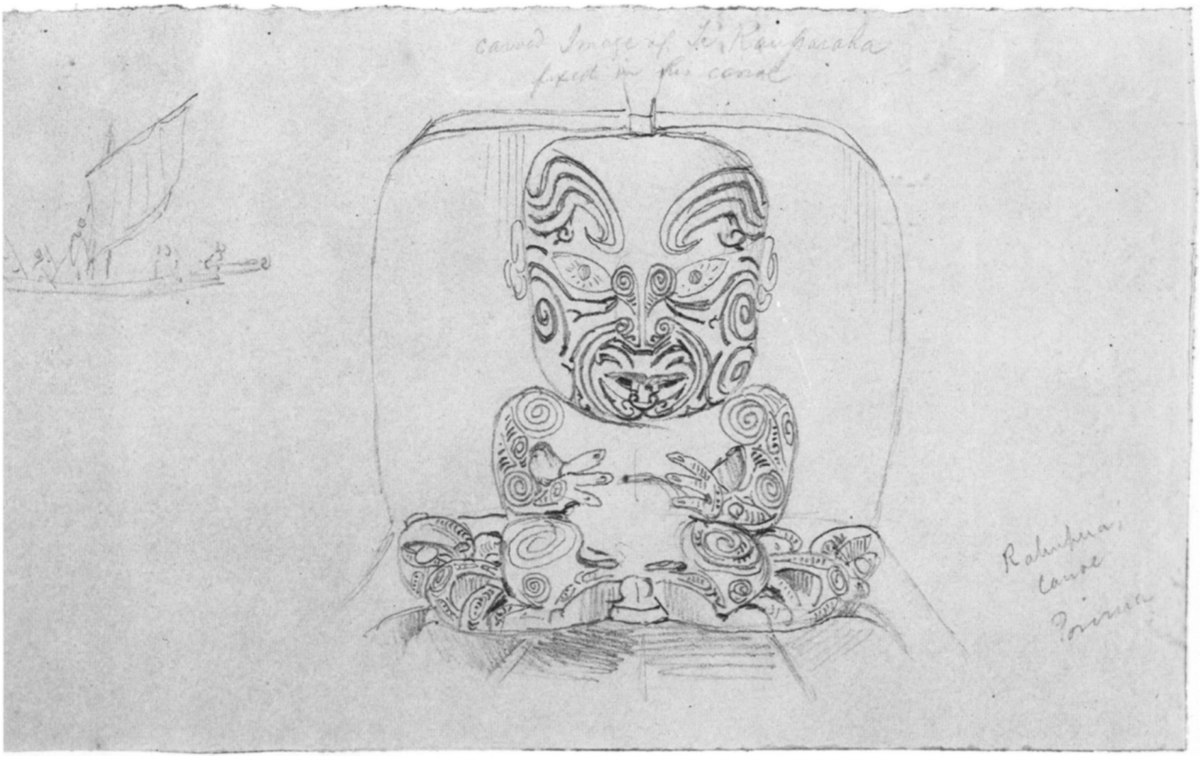
1 Michael Jehle, New Bedford Whaling Museum 2005, pers comm.

2 Johansen 1958, p 64.

3 The concept of *tuahu* has been retained in Tahitian as the name of part of a *marae*; and, in Rarotongan, as *tua'au*, an altar in a *marae*.

4 Best 1922, p 34.

5 Recorded by Cowan 1930, pp 213–16.



George French Angas *Carved image of Te Rauparaha fixed in his canoe* 1844, pencil, 132 x 233 mm, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand A-020-008

WARRIOR CHIEF TE RAUPARAHA, FIXED IN HIS CANOE

Maori
Aotearoa New Zealand, southern Polynesia
c 1835
wood
43.5 cm
National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, 1978.95

One of the most intriguing things about this canoe figure is his direct stare. He appears to sit there, staring out, riveting those who look back. His smile glints, but for many who look at him the smile isn't that of a jolly old man, it has a hidden menace to it.

The drawing (above) of the canoe figure was sketched at Porirua Harbour in 1844 by George French Angas, and annotated 'carved image of Te Rauparaha fixed in his canoe'. Te Rauparaha was the best-known warrior–chief of early nineteenth-century New Zealand. When Angas sketched his figure, Te Rauparaha, who was born in the 1760s, was already an elder statesman. He spent his life fighting on behalf of his people, until his death in 1849. During the later stages of his life he was sketched by a number of Western artists, but the wood figure is the only known image of Te Rauparaha to have been created by a Maori artist.

The wood figure is an image of Te Rauparaha as a living being, presented in his canoe so that man and image could interact with each other. In a sense each was a mirror for the other, the canoe figure containing or reflecting the *mana* (spiritual power) of the warrior–statesman before it.

In Angas's sketch the carved figure is attached to the back of the transverse washboard, facing into the body of the canoe (*waka*) and connected to both sides of it. It also shows the boards at the floor and sides of the bow. The few differences between the figure in the sketch and the wood figure include the transverse washboard, which has since been removed, and the iridescent paua shell inlaid in the eyes, now missing. Also, the wood figure was varnished some time after it was removed from Te Rauparaha's canoe, and the varnish on the belly has contracted into patches. Angas's sketch and the condition of this wood figure indicates that it was created around 1835.

When comparing sketch and carving it is clear that the large carved figure would have filled most of the available space in the prow of a small *waka*. In the upper left of the drawing Angas sketched a *waka* with sail and a long prow. The size of the five occupants suggests that it was not a huge 25-metre-long *waka taua* (war canoe), but most likely Te Rauparaha's personal sailing *waka*, perhaps 15 metres long.

PAKOKO—HEAD FROM A CANOE

Maori

Aotearoa New Zealand, southern Polynesia

18th to early 19th century
wood
39 cm

Saint Louis Art Museum, 1558:1983, Bequest of Morton D May, 1983

Five or more centuries ago, a great and innovative artist created a new image in Maori art, a hard, head-butting, focused, aggressive and defiant head. The image appealed to a huge section of the population for it was eventually used on most portable objects, including the heads of canoes, treasure boxes (*waka huia*), weapons, staffs and ceremonial adze handles.

This head type, known colloquially today as a *tiki*, is generally described as a formalised or stylised head. The central elements of this new style include the strong projecting V-shaped forehead, the thick-lipped mouth that flares back from a central point, and the projecting tongue. On some objects the protruding forehead is an extension of the upper parts of the eyes, with the eyebrows forming the upper ridge.

On this head, curved and spiralling ridges have been used as surface decoration on the lips, nose and edges of the tongue. These design elements are known as *ritorito* (young shoot), *unaunahi* (fish scale), and *pakura* (swamp hen) compositions.[1]

Artists working in New Zealand in the late-eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries sketched many river or coastal canoes with this type of canoe head. Sydney Parkinson and Herman Diedrich Spöring drew several at Tolago Bay in October 1769.[2] They show the head thrusting forward in an aggressive way. The canoes were known as *waka tete*. Although smaller than the big, highly decorated war canoes (*waka taua*), *waka tete* were based on the same model, but without the elaborate decoration. Their hulls could be 14.5 to 18.5 metres long[3] and carry 12 or more crew.[4] They are today known as fishing canoes.

The head was part of a longer detachable section. It has been recorded as *tete*, *pākurukuru* and *pakoko*.[5] One meaning of *tete* is 'the figurehead of a canoe, without arms and legs. A canoe with a plain figurehead'.[6] *Pākurukuru* means 'the figure-head of a canoe carved into the resemblance of a human head and body, but without arms'[7].

Pakoko has several meanings including 'image', 'armless figurehead of a canoe',[8] 'dried or dried up'. *Pakoko tawhito* is a brave or warrior; a *whakapakoko* can refer to the chief man of a tribe; *pou whakapakoko* is a post with a carved top, which was used for purposes of incantation.[9]

It has been observed that 'in many particulars the Maori war canoe is very closely related to that of the Marquesas Islands.'[10] In the Marquesas Islands the verb *pakoko* means to mix, to agitate, to stir.[11] The man Pakoko was the last 'king of the Marquesas Islands' and chief of the warriors in Nukuhiva, the largest of the Marquesas Islands, until his execution by the French in 1845. Some accounts render his name as 'warrior'.[12]

Thus the linguistic evidence suggests that this canoe head was originally attached to a *wake tete*, and the word *pakoko* probably carries its original identity more comprehensively than 'figurehead', given *pakoko*'s connotations of dried-up hardness, warrior, ancestor, and incantation.

1 See Mead 1986, pp 36–42.
2 Joppien & Smith 1985, vol 1, pp 175, 176, 179, 180, 189.
3 Best 1925, canoe pp 177, 180.
4 ibid., p 183, fig 87.
5 ibid., p 177.
6 Hamilton 1901, p 22.
7 ibid., p 20.
8 Williams 1957; strangely *pakoko* is not referred to in Hamilton (1901).
9 ibid.
10 Haddon & Hornell 1936, p 210.
11 Dordillon 1931.
12 *Cornwall Chronicle* (Launceston, Tasmania), Wednesday 27 May 1846, pp 397–98.

PORTRAIT HEAD

Maori

Aotearoa New Zealand, southern Polynesia

17th to early 19th century

wood

23 cm

On loan to the Menil Collection, Houston, from Adelaide de Menil, A 7642

The realism of this life-size carved head gives it the appearance of a portrait, or even a death mask. The closed eyes give the impression of a recently deceased man rendered by a sculptor working with speed and skill to capture the final likeness of a much-loved warrior–chief.

Closer examination reveals an interesting illusion. When human eyes close, the upper eyelid moves over the eye to meet the lower eyelid at the base of the eye. This figure's eyelids meet in the middle.[1]

To a large extent every carved wood head or figure that depicted a *moko* must have been a portrait or an image of a particular person, for these tattoos represented a personal history as well as tribal status. Each *moko* was unique, and the *moko* was all that physically remained after someone died, carved into a wooden ancestor figure.

The Maori developed *moko* into a fine art. Every man of aristocratic birth endured the immense pain of having his face chiselled, then ingrained with charcoal, giving him a unique and permanent image that would last his lifetime. After he died and became an ancestor, his image could be carved in wood, made absolutely recognisable by his tattoo. Women also received face tattoo, more generally restricted to the lips and chin.

Every Maori carving of a person with a *moko* depicts an individual known to the sculptor. When a person was given a *moko* the objective was to cut deeply into the skin and to dye the cut with ground up charcoal mixed with a little water to produce a deep blue mark, so as to enhance the quality of fierceness on the face and, as Robley 1896 noted, '... give hardness and rigour to those muscles which are acted upon by the softer passions'.[2]

On the back of the head, near the base, is a stub of the original wood that was used to attach the head to something else. The stub has been sawn off and a registration or dealer's label is fixed to it.

Further up is a small iron hoop that was used to attach the head to a wall. Above this is a raised, semicircular shape or knob. An analysis of freestanding Maori figures[3] has found that the wooden topknot at the crown of the head was used to gather the human hair attached to the figure by means of horizontal holes drilled in a band over the top of the head. It is possible that this semicircular knob shape was also used to attach human hair. A ridge that arcs over the top of the forehead has four openings beneath it, which could also have been used to secure human hair. It is most likely that a portrait head, created to be a likeness of a major warrior, would be decorated with this kind of detail.

1 During the research for this exhibition, at least seven figures from Tahiti were found with eyes that have a horizontal ridge or valley across their centre or middle. It is not yet clear whether there is a direct link between this head and the eighteenth-century Tahitian figures.

2 Robley 1896, p 28.

3 Barrow 1959, p 115.

GROUP OF FOUR FIGURES

Maori

Aotearoa New Zealand, southern Polynesia

before 1830

wood, shell (*Haliotis*)

68 cm

Kunstkamera (Peter the Great Museum of Anthropology and Ethnology), Russian Academy of Sciences, St Petersburg, 736.120

Maori sculptural works were usually created within known categories, but this piece defies categorisation as there are no other similar works.

It features four figures, none of which appear to be portraits, carved from a single piece of wood. There is a hole at the top of the head of the main figure that may have been used to attach it to something else.

The sculpture was created in the style of the Manutuke region (now Gisborne),[1] but the circumstances of its original collection are not yet known. The prefix 736 in its registration number indicates that it was part of a collection of more than 300 pieces brought back from Russian voyages before 1826 and which were given by the Russian Admiralty to the Kunstkamera in 1830.[2] The most likely source was Admiral Fabian von Bellingshausen's 1820 visit to Queen Charlotte Sound, in the southern part of Cook Strait, New Zealand.

The tip of the top male figure's penis touches the open vulva of the female figure, who is upside down beneath him. Another male figure stands on her shoulders. His penis touches the left side of her head.

The fourth figure, a male, is attached to the back of the head of the top male figure, partially enclosed in a frame, or sculpted frieze. The frieze connects to the figure's front and top in at least 12 places, and again behind its legs, where it is attached to the top male. This figure has a strongly arched body, pulled back arms and its hands are planted on the top of its buttocks. His penis touches the back of the head of the main figure.

All four figures are depicted in the formal '*tiki*' style, and do not have the *moko* (tattoo) on their faces that would indicate they are portraits of individuals. Large spirals on the shoulders of each figure appear to be indicating the movement and force of the arms.

Probably the most complicated action in this composition is that of the female figure. Her right arm lifts her right leg up and out, enabling the male to penetrate her more completely. Her left hand is on the left side of her neck, under her chin, her head tilts to the right. Her genitalia are in the anatomically correct position, but the same cannot be said of the three male figures. The penis of each male figure is located where the navel is on a human. Neither figure has a scrotum. Perhaps the artist deliberately conflated penis and navel so that the male, creating life by impregnating the woman, appears also to have just been born, with an umbilical cord in the form of a penis, connecting him to the female.

1 Attributed by David Simmons in Barratt 1979, p 154.

2 Kaeppler 2003, p 34.

Atua inspired

ATUA INSPIRED

Tena koutou katoa, my name is George Tamihana Nuku. I am an artist of Maori, Scot and German descent. I am from Te Aotearoa/New Zealand. My work and role as an artist and communicator has continually taken me around the world for the past 13 years. I am 49 years old.

All of the art I create is Atua inspired. This allows me to place myself in the universal contextual relationship of Atua–Tupuna–Tangata: Gods–Ancestors–People.

As I get older and both create and experience more through the work I do and the potent places, cultures and peoples I encounter and relate with, it has led me to a point where I realise how much value there is in my never-ending depictions, manifestations and ultimately the personifications of these forces of nature herself. In this I consider myself both a guardian and protector of the Maori religion.

That is not to say the Atua are an institution of worship as in Christianity, but I say it is more akin to Shinto, where these forces are revered, as in a mountain or a stream, or a grove of trees or a pebble of jade or to seek out our *ruakoha*—the place where the lightning strikes the ground for you and only you. It is your gift, your sign, your destiny. It is through *tohu* or portents like this that the Atua reveal both themselves to you and you to them.

My conviction, trust and ultimately love to and for this has never wavered in my role and life as a Tohunga. It has been said about me that because of this the Atua have favoured me with success. They have also put in front of me trials of hardship to both test my resolve and temper the steel of my blade, to ensure I cut sharp without being over brittle and to make sure I am malleable without being a blunt object or a blunt edge.

Through people like me the Atua continue to live, and to live one has to eat and I am one of the people who places these payments on the Tuahu. In return they vest me with the powers that negate fear and doubt—beyond the banal, beyond this globalisation of the mediocre, to ensure that we do not turn our backs to the Atua, that we do not turn our backs to nature herself, that we do not turn our backs on each other and on ourselves.

A couple of years ago I had a revelationary moment through a conversation with my cousin Te Whareaitu. He was sharing with me the meaning and concept of the word *Papatuanuku*,

the Maori definition of Earth. He broke it down to *Papa*, or flat expansive land (earth itself), *tua*, to revolve and *nuku*, the force of movement behind or propelling the revolve.

This conversation completely blew my mind and revealed to me the nature of Atua—to turn or revolve on itself, and to turn this way requires an axis, and that to me is the essence of Atua—that the nature of the universe is cyclic. This has manifested in my more recent works where I have created large floating sculptures that revolve. The form of these sculptures to date has been in the form of a cube to represent the world or the universe. I place the Atua on all sides of the cube, and through their structural composition I show interconnectiveness through their genealogical relationship to both each other and to us.

It is here I reveal myself not only as the creator of this idea but also as the *axis mundi*—the pivot that is required to facilitate this movement and its momentum and to maintain the equilibrium of this.

The multifaceted aspect of the cube's sides reveals that quality in the Atua and that in ourselves—the revolving allows all our multitudinality to be seen and felt in a given moment.

To me it is vital to expose these archetypes that exist both externally and reside internally in the psychic landscape between our ears.

Ultimately I will work on a Rubik's cube type sculpture that allows the sides of the cube to reconfigure in the same way that Maori, upon leaving their tropical home islands, changed the order of the Atua to suit the new environment and conditions of Aotearoa. We moved from a world of waves to a world of trees—Tangaroa in his ocean dominion takes a subordinate role to his brother Tane Mahuta, the lord of the forest.

These concepts and realities are no less valid today. In fact I say they are more vital, crucial and necessary today than ever, to expand life and enhance survival for us all in Te Ao Turoa—this long standing world, in Te Ao HuriHuri—this ever turning, ever changing world.

George Nuku

MARU

Maori
probably North Island, Whanganui region, Aotearoa New Zealand, southern Polynesia
19th century or earlier
wood, shell, fibre, traces ochre
36 cm

Museum of Archaeology & Anthropology, University of Cambridge, Z 6610

The term 'god stick' or 'stick god' belies the elegance of this figure, which has a beautifully rendered *tiki* head, with the rest of the 'stick' uncarved and in its natural state. A length of fibrous string, probably made from flax and partly ochred, is tightly wound around the middle of the uncarved wood. The bottom of the stick is broken.

There are subtle differences between the right and left sides of the figure, such as the additional ridge near the top of the head that is evident on the left side.

Fine remnants of the red ochre, which would have covered the surface of the head, particularly the lips, are visible in the grain of the wood. A paua shell eye remains in the left socket but is missing from the right. Extending up from the nose in a soft curve, the ridge separating the two sides of the face culminates at the peak of the head.

This gentle curve of the essential form of the head is characteristic of this figure, for it is also found in the detail carved into the surface of the 'eyebrows'. The eyes slant upwards at a steep angle, seemingly incorporating the ears. Dominating the entire composition is the wide 'figure-of-eight' mouth, its long tongue extended down. Tongue details include the central flat ridge and lateral squared ridges. In each corner of the mouth are triangular shapes, almost fleshy labia, which is a feature found on many related heads.

This figure came into the Cambridge collection with the name Maru, an *atua* who is known as god of war in central Polynesia. In Aotearoa New Zealand, however, Maru was known more for cultivation than war. The two are linked, for when a crop fails the people must eat, so they go to war against their neighbours. There were many who said that Maru was the principal *atua* of the Maori, because of his association with cultivation.[1]

Like all strong forces, the *atua* Maru was both good and bad. The good was the help he could give a man if his food crop was failing. If Maru ignored the man's prayers, a dog would be killed and cooked. The head was then given to the *tohunga* (priest) who took it to the *tuahu* (altar), and there its teeth were exposed so Maru could see them and laugh.[2]

Maru's evil side manifested through his incessant hunger for food. He was known as *he atua tangi kai* (a god always crying for food). If his share was omitted at meals, or if he was neglected, he would kill. If a large eel was trapped, or fish caught, the head must be given to Maru.

Maru is one of the well-travelled *atua* of Polynesia. He was a god on the Chatham Islands[3] and is known from Tahiti. He was brought to Aotearoa New Zealand by different peoples and in various forms. When the great leader Turi migrated from Tahiti to New Zealand on the *Aotea* canoe around 1350, Maru was one of the four *atua* he brought with him.[4] People who worked with Maru were based in the Whanganui River valley and their ancestors go back 21 to 23 generations through Paerangi, who came to New Zealand with the major migration of Turi's time.

1 Smith 1905, p 150.
2 Tu-whawhakia translated in ibid., p 145.
3 Shand 1895, pp 89–98.
4 Tautahi & Taipuhi 1900, pp 219–20.

KAHUKURA

Maori

probably North Island, Whanganui region, Aotearoa New Zealand, southern Polynesia

19th century or earlier

wood, fibre, traces ochre

37 cm

Museum of Archaeology & Anthropology, University of Gambridge, Z 6611

Although said to have come from the Whanganui region, this 'god stick' was carved in a different style to the Maru figure (p 218),[1] which is also reputed to have originated there. The wood used to make this piece is softer than that used for Maru, and the artist was not as skilled, as is shown in the roughly indicated surrounds to the eye.

The wood on the shaft of this figure was darkened or blackened by some means, and the head has been coloured with red ochre. Abrasion over the years has removed some of this surface, particularly on the left side of the face, exposing a lighter coloured wood underneath. Some of the abrasion could have been caused by insects gnawing at the wood, which is very dry.

The shape of the eye is the dominant feature of this head and the slight crest extending upwards from the nose and over the top of the head reflects the curve of the 'eyebrows'. The 'figure-eight' shaped mouth is relatively rudimentary, with no surface detail apart from a double ridge delineating the inner and outer edges of the lips. The triangular shapes at the corners of the mouth are almost vestigial, however, there is a triangular-shaped object at the top of the ridged tongue, as it extends and curves under the mouth. Does this object depict an actual tongue and is the ridged tongue-like arch beneath it something else?

Beneath the head the remainder of the wood is a peg-shaped shaft, with abrasion at the end consistent with the peg having been inserted into the ground. The upper half of the shaft is neatly bound with new (un-ochred) string. A light incision circumscribes the shaft a few millimetres below the bound string.

It is not absolutely clear which Kahu-kura this figure is associated with. The navigator Kahukura was from Samoa, and is said to have brought the sweet potato (*kumara*, *Ipomoea batatas*) to Aotearoa New Zealand.[2] Polynesian voyagers probably introduced this major food crop from South America.

Another major figure with a similar name was Ka'u-kura, grandfather of another great navigator, Tangiia-Nui on Tahiti.[3]

It is possible that the *atua* Kahu-kura, whichever one he was, came with Turi when he migrated from Tahiti on the *Aotea* around 1350 (p 218).

1 Cambridge Z 6610.
2 Stair 1895, p 102.
3 Te Arii-tara-are 1919.

HUKERE

Maori
probably North Island, Whanganui region, Aotearoa New Zealand, southern Polynesia
19th century or earlier
wood
37 cm

Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, Cambridge University, Z 6612

This is one of the rare figures carved outside the mainstream Maori art tradition. Its four dominant features (crest, eyes, mouth and hands) work together to produce a strong image that combines lizard elements in the face with human arms and hands.

The artist created a prognathic face with the mouth showing oversized negative image of teeth. He worked with symmetry, which is clearly visible on the back of the figure where a V-shaped ridge reduces the flatness. Over the top of the head a ridge develops into something resembling a central crest that curves over and drops off abruptly just before the nose. Near the back of the head, the large round eyes, one each side, are set within a deeply carved socket that tapers toward the front of the mouth. The left eye is almost perfectly circular with a convex surface, but no central pupil to hold a paua shell inlay. Beneath the head are shoulders, then arms with the wrists raised and the hands pointing inwards and downwards, almost meeting at the centre with a unique and clearly meaningful gesture.

Below the arms the figure becomes a tapered shaft that is eroded and broken at the terminus. The wood holds traces of red ochre that can be seen on the face, in particular around the left eye socket. The words 'Wanganui god' are hand-written in ink on the shaft.

This work is so unlike any other art object that is known to have been created in New Zealand in the nineteenth century or earlier, it is tempting to propose that it originated elsewhere. As shown elsewhere in this exhibition (p 226), other unique works of art created outside conventional art styles or traditions were used in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Hukere, also known as Hukere-nui, was an *atua* in the Whanganui region associated with the scraping of bones and their deposition in ossuaries.[1] The carved wood figure is an *aria*—a representation of an *atua* and the medium (*mua*) through which an *atua* was invoked and could make known its wishes.

1 Graham 1923, p 50.

JUMPING-JACK (*KARETAO* OR *KARARI* OR *TOKO RAURAPE*)

Maori

Aotearoa New Zealand, southern Polynesia

19th century or earlier

wood

53.2 cm

National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, 1981.1083

At first glance this figure is simply a small Maori figure, without arms. The head is bent forwards and the eyes give the impression that they are closed. The figure is not depicted asleep or dead, however, because the small rectangular slit in the eyes could have held lustrous red sealing wax or paua shell, which would have given the face a remarkable impression of life.

The fine carving on his naturalistic face depicts a *moko*, indicating that the figure represented a specific person. The mouth is shown with a number of horizontal ridges on the lips, perhaps an indication of speech or the act of speaking.

Below the arms is an object that is clearly not part of a human body, possibly a bag or pouch, which is held in place by a band or belt wrapped around the body and overlapping at the back of the figure. The figure's nipples show clearly above the band. Fine marks that are carved into the front surface of this 'bag' give the impression of a face. The only image found to date that resembles this object is on a fence or palisade post sketched by George French Angas around 1845.[1]

This small figure, of the type generally known as *karetao*, but also recorded as *karari* and *toko raurape*,[2] is probably the earliest of the few similar figures that are known to have survived from the early contact period. Westerners called these figures jumping-jacks, or puppets.

The body is now without arms, although the holes for attaching moveable arms are clearly visible, as is the hole through the upper chest, roughly where the two clavicle bones would meet, that was most likely where the strings to move the two arms were attached.

The buttocks and part of the side of the figure's abdomen are carved in a known spiral tattoo pattern. The lower right of the figure's torso is lightly carved in curving patterns that finish abruptly near the midline of the body. These do not resemble any known tattoo patterns, but may have been carved for a specific purpose. No genitalia are visible, but markings between the legs suggest that genitalia (probably male because of the full-face *moko*) were originally depicted and later removed.

Under the feet and above the handle is a shape that might represent two feathers in a V, with part of a human-like face above it. Each foot has three toes.

Puppets and jumping jacks have been recorded in New Zealand and Hawai'i, suggesting an earlier origin in central Polynesia or further west, although there is no record of similar pieces from elsewhere.

Elsdon Best referred to these Maori figures as toys. When operated, the figure would imitate a person performing a *haka*, while the operator sang particular songs known as *oriori karetao*.

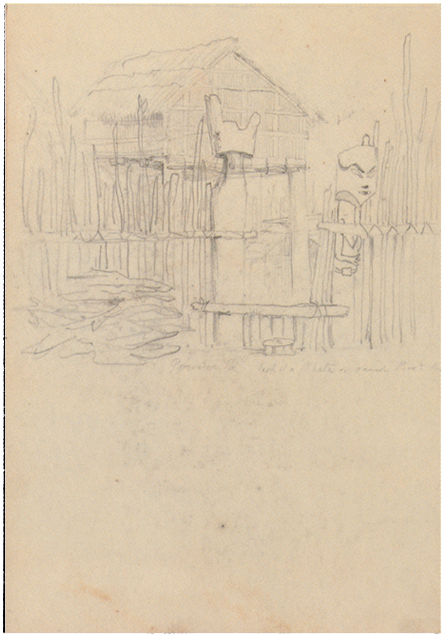
In Hawai'i, puppet figures are known as *hula ki'i* and, by the nineteenth century, they were used to entertain, often by satirising somebody who deviated from customary norms.[3] There is evidence,[4] however, indicating that before the Hawaiian conversion to Christianity in 1819, *hula ki'i* were used in sacred context in Hawaiian *heiau* (sacred enclosures).

1 *Porirua pa back of a Whata, New Zealand*. George French Angas *Sketchbook no 2*, National Library of Australia, Canberra, nla.pic-vn4837645.

2 Known as *karetao* or *keretao* by the Tuhoe people; *karari* by the Ngati-Porou; and *toko-raurape* by the Nga Puhi (Best, *Games* 1925, p 170).

3 Luomala 1984, p 71, 73.

4 Choris 1822, pl 5; Damon, nd.



George French Angas *Porirua pa back of a Whata, New Zealand* c 1845, watercolour and pencil, 17.7 x 25.3 cm, National Library of Australia, Canberra

Figure, Hawai'i wood, tapa, bark cloth, pearl-shell, human teeth, fish teeth and rush, British Museum Oc,+.249

GOD STAFF

Found at Wickliffe Bay, Otago Peninsula, South Island, Aotearoa New Zealand, southern Polynesia
probably 18th century or earlier
wood, traces red ochre
21 cm

Otago Museum, Dunedin, New Zealand, D 38.1245

Ellis Sinclair found this figure during an excavation in a cave on Otago Peninsula, 1938. He was examining a difficult-to-reach cave that was used as a hunting base and probably also as a hiding place around 1800. Everything within the cave was very dry.

> While removing the matting and bedding (beneath which were more shells and fishbones) I found standing in an upright position, beneath a space where the matting was charred by fire, and wedged firmly between the two large boulders, a wooden representation of a man about eight inches in height, of heavy wood, probably *kowhai*, showing faint evidence of having been painted red at one time. Arms and legs are missing, and the head is slightly charred on one side, this charring probably received when the bedding and matting were burned. The neck ... is extremely elongated. ... It shares length of neck and retraction of stomach with the small wooden figures of Easter island, but is otherwise quite unlike them. It seems to stand nearest to the long-necked gods of the Cook islands in the Oldman collection.[1]

The style of the figure is unique. It represents the human form, for it has a complete head, a long neck, arms (both broken and missing when Sinclair found the figure), a slender and almost famished abdomen, a penis, and legs (also broken and missing). The face is ellipsoid in shape with an unusual, almost rectangular and slightly projecting mouth.

With its long tapering neck, this piece is most closely related to the equally enigmatic figure,[2] which was then considered very old, that was collected in the Hervey Group (somewhere in the southern Cook Islands of central Polynesia) by London Missionary Society Rev John Williams in the 1820s.

A week after his original discovery, Sinclair returned to the cave to search the area where the figure was found. He located human remains within two feet of the figure, including leg bones that had been opened so that the marrow could be extracted. In the cave he also found fragments of a pale-green eggshell, from which he estimated that the original egg would have been six to seven inches in length. He recorded from Mrs Barrett, who lived with the Maori people on Okia Flat, that this cave was *tapu*, having been the 'scene of slaughter by Te Wera, presumably about the year 1750'.

Te Wera ('The burnt') was a Kai Tahu *ariki* (aristocrat) of the Kai Tahu (*iwi*) tribe on the South Island, based at Waikouaiti, about 30 kilometres north of Otago Peninsula. He was intent on dominating the southern part of the South Island in the mid-to-late eighteenth century. Te Wera kept a 'celebrated god' named Kahukura in a cave on the peninsular at Waikouaiti. Kahukura was also an *atua* and major ancestor on Rarotonga, in the Cook Islands, where he is known as Ka'ukura. Throughout much of the South Island of New Zealand, Kahukura was known as a war god, synonymous with Uenuku.[3]

It is possible that a figure of Kahukura, created in the Cook Islands, survived 500 years, and the journey to New Zealand, to be brought to Okia Flat where it was left behind during the raid after the people in the cave were eaten by Te Wera and his men.

1 Sinclair 1940, p 139.

2 Now in the Otago Museum O 50.065; acquired from Oldman (Oldman 1953, p 8, pl 14).

3 See 'The stealing of an *atua*—a tradition of the Otago Coast' in Cowan 1930, pp 213–16.

PAEPAE

Maori
probably Arawa region, Lakes District, North Island, Aotearoa New Zealand, southern Polynesia
19th century or earlier
wood
243 cm
National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, 1981.1082

This long horizontal panel is a *paepae*, an architectural feature at the base of a storehouse (*pataka*). When the select few entitled to enter the storehouse stepped over the *paepae* to do so, they were stepping into a more sacred space. The storehouse to which this *paepae* belonged would have been raised off the ground and supported by one or more poles. Such a *pataka* was generally considered sacred in the sense that only certain people, such as the chief who owned it, could access it. A beautifully carved *pataka* was the pride of a village, and was often positioned in full view of the chief's house so that he could look upon it with satisfaction.

The central figure of this *paepae* is female, standing strong, with legs arched and toes gripping the floor. Deep and powerful shoulders sweep down into curving arms, three-fingered hands clasping her central body. On each side of her is a *manaia*, its beak to the side of her head.

Manaia are depictions of spirit beings, helpers, a form of *atua*. Liminal beings such as *manaia* seem to bridge the two worlds of existence, perhaps in this composition indicating the relationships between the central figure and Te Ao (the world of light) and the other world, Te Po (the world of darkness). The *manaia* on the left of the central figure (our right) is female—the only *manaia* known to be depicted with sexual organs. *Manaia* seem to be always shown in profile.

The female figures that are holding the arm of each of the central *manaia* are depicted being attacked by another *manaia*, which appear to be ripping out their throats.

The carved spirals on the figures' limbs depict the direction, tension and strength of movement. For example, on the central figure's upper thighs, unwinding spirals indicate the strength of the leg gripping out and down. The left arm of a female figure on the central figure's left grips the *manaia*'s head and the shoulder spiral indicates that the female figure is pulling.

The spiral on the right leg of this female figure is carved with a single ridge and valley, which is unlike the involuted carving elsewhere on the *paepae*. This change in style suggests that one of the sculptors of the piece was trained to use a different style from another region.

It is possible that the *paepae* represents Hine-nui-Te-Po (goddess of death, also known as Hine-titama) who, with the assistance of six *manaia*, is dragging four women to their death.

Since it was first created this *paepae* was covered with red ochre, traces of which remain in the wood grain. Marks on the back indicate that the wood was carved with a stone blade, which suggests the piece dates from the early nineteenth century at the latest, before iron and steel tools became widely available.

The front of the *paepae* has been abraded by a wire brush, probably in an attempt to remove the black paint. The slightly desiccated condition of the wood suggests that the *paepae* was kept for some time in a dry location, perhaps a cave, before it was sold out of the Maori world.

This *paepae*'s history is not known and the only evidence of its world prior to its acquisition by the National Gallery of Australia in 1981 is the number E2931 chalked on the back. Its closest known relative is a fragment of a *pataka* that is now in the Otago Museum[1] and which has been attributed to the Lakes District. It is most likely an older piece than this *paepae*.

The concept of *paepae* is also found in Tahiti and Rarotonga in central Polynesia. The word *paepae* described a pavement of stones, foundation for a building, a platform, or, the pavement of a *marae*.[2] The *marae* contained the sacred area where the interaction between humans and *atua* took place.

1 Registered in the Otago Museum, Dunedin, as O 50.036, and acquired as part of the Oldman collection in 1948. The Otago Museum's *paepae* was brought to England by Admiral Sir Michael Seymour of Cardlington (died 1850)

2 Davies 1851.

ANCESTOR FIGURE

Maori
Attributed to Raharuhi Rukupo
Manutuke district, near Gisborne, east coast North Island, Aotearoa New Zealand, southern Polynesia
19th century
wood
79.7 cm
National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, 1981.1084

This figure has an undeniable presence. With his eyes open he appears to watch people around him with a calm, priest-like stillness. His face is almost perfect, for his *moko* is incised clearly and finely, and his lips are tattooed. People are attracted to him, to his strength and to his sense of calm. They sense that they are having personal experience with him, an interaction.

His naturalistic face has been carved in a different style to the body. The finely chiselled *moko* was that of a specific person, most likely an ancestor. Part of the *moko* was deliberately left unfinished on his right cheek. One ear is broken and missing and blade marks on the back of the remaining ear have been softened by rubbing, probably by people caressing the figure over a number of years. The mouth was carved with such sensitivity that the figure appears about to speak—truly the work of a master carver.

His hands clasp his body, his right hand near his heart, his left hand over his belly. The markings carved deeply into the front of his body and down his legs are not tattoos, but style elements that help depict his character and stability. Those on his shoulders emphasise strength, and the spirals indicate that his arms are moving towards the front of the body. Smaller spirals on the wrists describe more subtle movement. Meaningful patterns are carved across the front of his torso, but not the back.

Spiral shapes are carved into his shoulder blades, but the centre of his back is clear. Spirals are carved deeply into his buttocks—anti-clockwise on his right cheek, clockwise on the left. Buttocks were tattooed on many men and some women in the early nineteenth century.

The figure is grounded by strong, muscular legs; his toes are elegantly retracted and his kneecaps are asymmetrical. The patterns that sweep down the legs complete an almost perfect being.

There are blade markings at the back of his head where the house post was removed. This figure and the now missing house post would originally have stood in the centre of a *whare nui* (meeting house), which symbolised a primal ancestor of the people who owned the house. The post of the *pou-tokomanawa* held up the spine of the ancestor whose ribs formed the rafters and outstretched arms became the frontal boards.[1]

In the layered symbolism of the *pou-tokomanawa* figure there is allusion to more than the ancestors. The word encapsulates a variety of meanings: *pou* is a post, a support, a standing sculpture (it has the same range of meanings in central Polynesia); *toko* is to support or to separate.[2] *Manawa* can mean heart (of a person), and seat of affections.

The figure has been attributed to the work of the nineteenth-century master sculptor Raharuhi Rukupo, a celebrated *tohunga whakairo* (carver–priest) of the period and leader of the Gisborne or Turanga school of carving.

1 Barrow 1976, p 13.
2 George Nuku, pers comm 29 June 2012, and at his exhibition at Eglise St Roch, Paris, 4 July 2012.

FIGURE FROM A PANEL

Maori
Aotearoa New Zealand, southern Polynesia
probably before early 19th century
wood
42 cm
Gordon Sze, New York

There is a striking difference between the lighter coloured head and the darker, more worm-eaten, body of this naturalistic figure. The eyes are slanted and triangular, an effect that is accentuated by the angled *moko* (facial tattoo) directly underneath.

The head is almost as large as the body, which gradually diminishes in scale, so that the legs from the knees down are about the length of the figure's upper lip to chin. Despite this massive change in scale, the artist has created the appearance of a perfectly proportioned ancestor, which is largely achieved through the buttress-like supports extending from the back of the head to the back of the shoulders, giving the illusion that they are part of the neck. The broad shoulders have developed deltoids that flow in and down to the figure's chest, which allows the rest of the body and legs to assume much smaller proportions.

The figure has been excavated under the collarbone and between part of the neck and the armpit, so that the collarbone is shaped like a wreath, with both sides brought together by the hands. The artist has created a flowing effect, beginning at the hands, sweeping up through the arms and shoulders, then forward and down into the chest and back through the hands.

The figure was originally carved in relief as part of a panel. At some point most of the panel was cut away and, between 1977 and 1982, the panel was further reduced, leaving the figure standing free. The head does not display any evidence of erosion. This indicates that the figure was not exposed to the weather and is likely to have been part of an interior panel.

The timber is perforated with a number of vesicles or hollow tubes, which resemble worm holes. Closer inspection of the back of the figure shows that they are all aligned in about the same direction—horizontally across the figure—which suggests that they are part of the original structure of the wood.

Glossary

GLOSSARY

Note: names of places, people, and atua vary according to the source of information. Such variation is accepted within oral histories

adze (toki) : stone tool hafted to wooden haft and handle, used in carpentry

ahu : 1. sacred enclosure; 2. raised platform within an enclosed marae (Tahiti); see also marae, me'ae, heiau

aitu : generic term for spirit

Aitutaki : island in the Cook Islands

akua-hulu-manu : literally 'feathered god'; generic term for portable feathered images generally known as Ka'ili (Hawai'i)

akua ka'ai : portable image containing an akua or a connection to an akua; literally 'god with a sash'; owned by chiefs and carried in a ka'ai sash worn by a kahu, the man responsible for the akua ka'ai's safety (Hawai'i)

akuaku (aku-aku) : supernatural spirit being, wild spirit, guardian spirit (Rapa Nui)

ali'i (alii) : (Hawai'i) see ariki

ancestor : person from whom one is descended, usually at least two generations before, sometimes 40 or more generations ago

ancestor figures : image created in the human form, depicting an ancestor

ancestral penis : concept of male reproductivity and ancestry inherited from the male lineage

Aotearoa New Zealand : group of islands located in the south-western part of eastern Polynesia; the use of the term Aotearoa New Zealand is to clearly refer to the Polynesian Maori people

Archaic Phase of central Polynesia : period of first exploration and initial settlement of the various islands of Polynesia; characterised by long-distance voyaging in double-hulled sailing canoes (see also Classic Phase)

aria : visible material emblem or representation of an atua and the medium (mua) through which an atua was invoked and could make known its wishes (Maori)

ari'i : (Hawai'i) see ariki

ariki (ali'i, ari'i) : aristocrat, leader, chief, king, person understood to have an atua as a distant ancestor

'arioi : fraternity of players that travelled through the Society Islands and elsewhere, noted for their unusual customs

Arununa (Aroonoona) : type of atua on Raivavae, Austral Islands

Atiu : island in the Cook Islands, part of the Nga-Pu-Toru group of islands

atua (akua; etua; hotooa; 'otua) : presence of an invisible being; spirit; god

Austral Islands : archipelago of five islands in central-eastern Polynesia; larger islands include Raivavae, Rurutu, Tubuai. Now part of French Polynesia

Austronesian languages : large family of languages of which the Polynesian languages are a sub-group; spoken today in Taiwan, Philippines, Malaysia, Indonesia, Madagascar, in parts of north-coast New Guinea, most of island Melanesia, all of Polynesia

breasts : two raised mounds on the upper chest; more generally associated with male than female wood figures in eastern Polynesia, representing the breasts of an old man

burin : tool made from shark tooth, used for cutting surface decoration on wooden objects

central Polynesia : the islands of eastern Polynesia located within the tropics; including the Cook Islands (especially Rarotonga, Aitutaki), Austral Islands (Rurutu, Raivavae), Society Islands (Tahiti, Raiatea), Tuamotu archipelago, Marquesas Islands (Nuku Hiva, Ua Pou)

Classic Phase of central Polynesia : period of consolidation of settlements throughout the various islands of Polynesia; characterised by development of regional identities, more inward-looking, extensive marae enclosures in stone; long distance navigation very rare; extends until the period of contact with the Western world (see also Archaic Phase)

club : implement made from hard wood as an extension of the arm, designed as a weapon for smashing an enemy, generally treated as an art object with a strong bond to its owner

Cook Islands : archipelago of islands in central eastern Polynesia; largest islands include Rarotonga, Aitutaki, Mangaia

deified ancestor : ancestor who over a period of many generations of worship has become an atua, more than a human, someone with transcendent powers

Easter Island (see Rapa Nui)

eastern Polynesia : the islands that were first settled in the second wave of Polynesian migration; including the islands of central Polynesia (Cook Islands, Austral Islands, Society Islands, Tuamotu archipelago, Marquesas Islands), as well as Rapa Nui, Hawaiian archipelago, Aotearoa New Zealand

ewharra : god house (Tahiti). See fare

fa'ahikehe : type of ivi (power), means 'two sides', something that can change into something else (Tonga)

fare (ewharra, hale, hare, whare) : house

first line ariki : first born of the first born of the first born of a first-born ariki

glyph : symbol carved in relief on a figure, its associations generally lost to us today

god, gods : atua; idol

goddess : female atua; female figure; beautiful woman

hale : house (see fare)

hare : house, family, home (see fare); it is possible the komari (vulva) symbol is a hare symbol (see also komari) (Rapa Nui)

Havaiki (Avaiki, Hawaiki) : the place migrants came from, with connotations of 'the other world'; also understood to be an origin island, possibly Savai'i in Samoa

heathens : Christian term for people who do not follow the Christian religion

heiau : sacred enclosure in the Hawaiian archipelago; analagous to marae in central Polynesia

Hervey Islands : nineteenth-century term for the southern Cook Islands (Rarotonga, Aitutaki); sometimes also included the Austral Islands

Hiro (Iro, Whiro) : major navigator from Raiatea, Society Islands (Tahitian)

Hiroa, Te Rangi (Sir Peter Buck) : (1877–1951) ethnologist of Aotearoa New Zealand Maori origin; director of Bernice P Bishop Museum, Honolulu (1936–51)

Hukere (Hukere-nui) : type of an atua in the Whanganui region, associated with the scraping of bones and their deposition in ossuaries (Maori)

iconoclasm : political or religiously inspired destruction of art objects, icons, and images; in Polynesia the most widespread iconoclasm occurred when people converted to Christianity, professing to abandon their traditional religious beliefs

idol : generic term used by missionaries to refer to art and other objects associated with atua; god was a synonym

image : generally a wood figure carved to represent an ancestor, or an atua

intaglio : design engraved or carved into the surface of hard wood, especially noted on clubs from Tonga

Iro : see Hiro

Island Melanesia (Near Oceania) : islands inhabited by people generally speaking Austronesian languages; including New Britain, New Ireland, Manus, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, New Caledonia

Iva (Hiva) : location which produced a significant number of navigators; probably in the Marquesas Islands, although may refer to the sacred marae Taputapuatea on Raiatea, Society Islands

ivi : a type of power, might, strength, or ability possessed by atua, different to that of ordinary people (Tonga)

ivi po'o : small image made from human limb bone; here ivi refers to 'bone', and a po'o is a special type of container associated with human remains (Marquesas Is)

kahu : man, generally a priest, who is servant or guardian responsible for the safety of an ali'i's akua or akua ka'ai (Hawai'i)

Kahukura (Kahu-kura; Ka'u-kura) : type of atua, found in many parts of Polynesia including Samoa,Tahiti, and Aotearoa New Zealand

kahuna : priest or person who offered sacrifices (Hawai'i) (see also ta'unga)

Ka'ili (Kaili, Kiëdë, Koila, Tairi) : literally 'net', a mode of fishing with hook and line, but no rod, in which the fish is snatched; also means 'plundered', portable feathered image or atua belonging to Kamehameha; probably the type constructed around a net-like structure made from olona fibres (*Tauchardia latifolia*) (Hawai'i)

Kamehameha (Tamaahmaah) : (c 1758–1819), king of Hawaiian archipelago 1810–19

Kanaloa : type of atua (Hawai'i). See Tangaroa

Kane : type of atua (Hawai'i). See Tane

Karika : navigator from Samoa, associated with establishment of vaka (tribes) on Rarotonga

kavakava (kava kava) : (Rapa Nui) literally ribs; reference to the wood figures known as moai kavakava

Kiha wahine : type of atua in Hawai'i, derived from reptile atua mo'o; manifested in sculpture in the form of a woman

Koila moku : type of atua known in Hawai'i, most likely Ka'ili (Kū ka'ili moku); large wood figure in Peabody Museum, Salem, known with this name, said to be akua associated with medicine

komari : vulva, three-lobed image of woman's external genitalia (see also hare) (Rapa Nui)

Ku : type of atua (Hawai'i). See Tu

Kū ka'ili moku : type of akua (atua) known in Hawai'i; family akua of Kamehameha; recorded as Kairi, Kiëdë, Koila, or Tairi in the early nineteenth century; documented images include 'feather gods', a large wooden figure at heiau Bukohala at Honokoa, Hawai'i, and possibly as a tall wood figure (with bird on top of head) in watercolour of heiau at Kailua Bay by Louis Choris 1816; known to be associated with war, and also with fertility of crops

kuahu : type of altar (Hawai'i). See tuahu

Kupe : long distance navigator, originally from Society Islands

Kuriri : type of atua, Aitutaki, Cook Islands

laumalie : type of spirit that only possessed aristocrats (Tonga)

Leverian Museum : museum (named Holophusicon) owned by Sir Ashton Lever, housed a number of objects collected during Cook's voyages. Established 1775, sold through auction 1806

life force : an animation that is found in the living, and which does not exist in the dead

London Missionary Society (LMS) : non-denominational protestant Christian missionary organisation, formed in London 1795

Lono : type of atua (Hawai'i). See Rongo

Luangiua (Ontong Java) : atoll, Polynesian Outlier in north-eastern Melanesia

Make-Make (Makemake) : type of atua; found mainly on Rapa Nui

mana : communicative power in both humans and atua-imbued objects; increasing the mana of something made it more effective

manaia : image often depicted in sculpture as a beaked being with human body; shown only in profile; associated with lizard and with world of atua, Te Po (Maori)

manava : source of emotions, the heart, courage (Rarotonga)

Mangaia : island in Cook Islands archipelago

Mangareva : high island in central eastern Polynesia; part of Gambier Archipelago; located at south-eastern end of Tuamotu Archipelago. Now part of French Polynesia

marae (me'ae; heiau) : sacred enclosure (eastern Polynesia); cleared space and meeting place in middle of village (western Polynesia; Aotearoa New Zealand)

maro (malo) : sacred girdle worn during coronation

Marquesas Islands : archipelago of islands in central eastern Polynesia; including Nuku Hiva, Ua Pou, Hiva Oa, Fatu Hiva. Now part of French Polynesia

Maru : type of atua, found in many parts of eastern Polynesia; recorded as an atua associated with war, also in association with fertility of crops

matakau : generic term for idol, probably ancestor figure (Fiji)

Matarau (Turanga) : type of atua on Mangaia, Cook Islands

Matariki (Pleiades, Seven Sisters star cluster) : associated with the atua Tane on Mangaia island

Maui : type of atua, found in both western and eastern Polynesia; not known to have been depicted in images from pre-Christian era

Mauke : island in the Cook Islands, part of the Nga-Pu-Toru group of islands

mauri : a material symbol of the hidden principle protecting vitality; the principle itself, a type of life force; often associated with the fruitfulness of agriculture, people, lands (Maori)

mataiapo : type of Polynesian aristocrat (Rarotonga)

matakau : generic term for ancestor figures from Fiji

me'ae : (Marquesas Islands). See marae

missionary : a person who actively spreads his or her religious ideas to other people; someone who tries to convert people to his or her religious beliefs

Mitiaro : island in the Cook Islands, part of the Nga-Pu-Toru group of islands

moai : image, likeness, sculpture (Rapa Nui)

mo'i (moi) : sovereign, supreme, king of an island; type of atua (Hawai'i)

moko : facial tattoo; previously achieved through deep cuts made by a chisel with incisions dyed with charcoal and water; added fierceness to the face and gave hardness and rigour to those muscles which are acted upon by the softer passions (Maori)

moko (mo'o, moo) : lizard, reptile; class of atua in Hawai'i derived from reptile with manifestation as female atua Kiha wahine; type of sculptural image on Rapa Nui known as moai moko or moai tangata moko

Mokoiro : type of atua on Mangaia, Cook Islands

moku : island (Hawai'i). See also motu

mo'o : reptile (Hawai'i). See moko

Motoro : type of atua on Mangaia, Cook Islands; son of Tangiia

motu (moku) : island (Rarotonga)

navigator : person who understands the location of a vessel in relation to the environment; generally the captain; can locate islands in the ocean using a variety of techniques

New Ireland : large island with five groups of off-shore smaller islands; located east of New Britain, north of Solomon Islands; most people speak Austronesian languages

Near Oceania : the part of the western Pacific settled 35 000 years ago; includes the island of New Guinea, Island Melanesia, New Britain, New Ireland, Manus, and the Solomon Islands (see also Remote Oceania)

Nga-Pu-Toru (Ngaputoru) : archipelago within the Cook Islands, comprising Atiu, Mauke, Mitiaro

nui : big, large, great

Nukumanu : atoll, Polynesian Outlier in north-eastern Melanesia

Nukuoro : atoll, Polynesian Outlier in south-western Micronesia; known for a unique group of wood figures including Ko Kave

Oahu (Woahoo) : island in Hawaiian archipelago

oramatua (oromatua) : wandering spirits that can be directed to attack people; sometimes housed in art objects (Tahiti, Rarotonga)

'Oro (Oro) : type of atua, protector of the island of Raiatea; national atua of Tahiti during Pomare period; also found on Rurutu, Austral Islands

Outliers (Polynesian Outliers, Samoic Outliers) : islands inhabited by Polynesian-speaking people located outside the Polynesian triangle; including Nukuoro and Kapingamarangi in the Micronesian region; Takuu, Nukumanu, Luangiua (Ontong Java), and Tikopea in the Island Melanesian region

pa : fortress, fortified village (Maori)

paepae : stone foundations of a house (Rarotonga); raised platform of stones or coral erected around the dwelling house of an aristocrat or priest (Rarotonga); raised platform of stones upon which a house is built (Marquesas Is; pavement of a marae (Tahiti); beam across the front of a house (Maori); sculpted board as threshold to a pataka (Maori)

pa'i-atua (pa'iatua) : type of ritual or ceremony during which images of atua have their old sennit and feather wrappings removed, are re-clothed in new sennit and feather wrappings, and re-activated; known to have been used with Tane on Huahine, and 'Oro on Tahiti, may have been used with other atua (Society Islands)

pakura (pākura) : type of bird, a swamp hen; name for type of surface design pattern (Maori)

Paparua : type of atua on Rapa, Austral Islands

pataka : storehouse raised up on posts, generally owned by chief on behalf of his people; elevated stage for storing food (Maori)

patupaiarehe : type of human-like being which can communicate between world of atua and humans; fairy or sprite; also known as paiarehe, patuparehe, parehe (Maori)

Polynesian Outliers (see Outliers)

Pomare I : (c 1742–1803) king of Society Islands 1791–1803

Pomare II : (c 1774–1821) king of Society Islands 1803–15

pou-tokomanawa (pou-toko-manawa, poutokomanawa) : central support pole for whare nui (meeting house); lower half is an ancestor figure; pole rises from back of figure's head; pou means post; toko means to support or to separate; manawa can mean heart (of a person) and seat of affections (Maori)

pou tupuna : ancestor images, have been used to delineate tribal boundaries, sacred sites, and ancestral buildings (Rarotonga)

presence : an image imbued with an atua can be understood as a living being, some people can sense its presence; also understood as an expressive image, a strong personality

profane : something part of normal life; not protected with tapu (see also sacred)

Puaikanui : big ear (Marquesas Is) (see also Tiki Puaikanui)

puhi : 'breathe' sign, a shape resembling a long horizontal mouth with serrated lips and a central slit; shown on the lower band of design elements on the 'u'u club on p 150 in this catalogue (Marquesas Is)

Raiatea (Ra'iatea) : island in Society Islands archipelago; through marae Taputapuatea was a major source for the dispersal of Society Islands religious system throughout much of eastern Polynesia

Raivavae (Ra'ivavae, Raivavai, Laivavai, Vavitao, Vavitu) : island in Austral Islands archipelago

rangitira (rangatira) : type of Polynesian aristocrat

Rapa (Rapa Iti, Oparo) : southernmost island of Austral Islands, French Polynesia

Rapa Nui (Easter Island) : single island located in far south-eastern Polynesia

Rarotonga : island in the Cook Islands archipelago

Remote Oceania : the part of the Pacific region first settled within the past 10 000 years; includes Vanuatu, New Caledonia, Fiji, Micronesia, and all of Polynesia (see also Near Oceania)

Romatane : chief of Nga-Pu-Toru islands in 1821

Rongo (Lono, Te-rongo) : type of atua, found in most parts of Eastern Polynesia

Ruanuu : chief deified as Te atua taitai tere on Aitutaki

Rurutu (Hitiroa, Oheteroa) : island in the Austral Islands archipelago

sacred : something associated with atua; precious; treated as separate from normal life; protected with tapu (see also profane)

sacred enclosure : part of marae or ahu directly associated with atua; separated by symbolic or other structure from other parts of the environment

sacrifice : offering an object of value to an atua, usually through the medium of an image; objects of value ranged from selections of food placed beside the image, to animals such as chickens or dogs being killed in front of the image, to humans being killed in front of the image

Sakauna : type of female atua on Tonga

Samoa (Navigator Islands) : archipelago in Western Polynesia; largest islands are Savai'i, Upolu, Tutuila

Savai'i : major island in Samoan archipelago

sennit (cinet) : string or rope made from coconut husk fibre

Society Islands : archipelago of islands in central Eastern Polynesia; large islands include Tahiti, Raiatea, Bora-Bora. Now part of French Polynesia

supernatural world : realm of existence outside normal time and space continua

Taaroa : type of atua, known elsewhere as Tangaroa (Rurutu). See Tangaroa

Taau : type of atua on Aitutaki

tahuna : priest in charge of ritual, choir, and chanting (Marquesas Is) (see also ta'unga)

Tane (Kane) : type of atua; found in most parts of eastern Polynesia

Tangaroa (Kanaloa, Taaroa, Taaroa, Ta'aroa, Tangaloa) : type of atua; found in both western and eastern Polynesia; earliest known atua

Tangiia (Tangi'ia, Tangiia-Nui, Tangiia the Great; Tai'ihia) : major thirteenth-century navigator; originated from Society Islands, probably Tahiti; also known from Samoa; a distributor of Society Islands religion; controller of Rarotonga, associated with establishment of vaka (tribes) on Rarotonga

tapa'o (tapao) : a sign of an atua

tapu (kapu, taboo) : a prohibition, demarcation to separate sacred from profane; to break tapu is considered wrong, or a crime; sacrifice is a means of atoning for a broken tapu

Taringa-Nui (Tarianui) : type of atua known from Nga-Pu-Toru islands, Cook Islands; literally 'big ear' (see also Tiki Puaikanui)

tattoo : indelible marking made in the body by inserting pigment through puncturing the skin; in many parts of Polynesia tattoos were made to mark specific transitions in life such as puberty, or to mark a change in social status

tau'a (tau'a nui) : inspirational priest, subject to possession by spirits or gods (Marquesas Is) (see also ta'unga)

ta'unga (kahuna, tau'a, tahuna, ta'ung, tohuga, tohunga, tufunga) : ritual specialist; priest; sculptor who creates the art object (Rarotonga)

taura : ancestral spirit that can live in other beings, such as centipedes and sharks (Rarotonga); 'strings' connecting a navigator to a famous ancestral navigator, such as Hiro (Rurutu)

Te Ao : the world in which humans live; the world of light (see also Te Po)

Teipe : type of atua on Mangaia, Cook Islands

Tekuraaki : type of atua on Mangaia, Cook Islands

temple : generic Western term for the buildings associated with sacred objects and located on a sacred enclosure, marae, or ahu

Te Po : the world in which atua exist; the underworld; the spirit world; an area on the island of Raiatea, Society Islands, in which are located a number of marae, including Taputapuatea (see also Te Ao)

tiki : formalised figure or image

Tiki Puaikanui : type of atua on Ua Pou island, Marquesas Islands (see also Taringa-Nui)

toa : hard wood used in central Polynesia for carving spears and a variety of wood figures; common tropical seashore tree known as ironwood, Casuarina equisetifolia

tohunga : (Maori) see ta'unga

tohunga whakairo : (Maori) carver–priest

Tonga (Kingdom of Tonga) : archipelago of islands in western Polynesia; largest islands are Tongatapu, 'Eua, Lifuka, and Vava'u

Tu (Ku) : type of atua; found in most parts of eastern Polynesia

tua'au : altar in a marae (Rarotonga) (see also tuahu)

tuahu (kuahu) : small altar; used in Archaic central Polynesia

Tuamotu (Pa'umotu, Paumotu) Archipelago : large group of atolls in central eastern Polynesia. Now part of French Polynesia

Tubua'i (Tubuai, Toubouai, Tupuai) : island in the Austral Islands archipelago

Tu'i Tonga : position of sacred king of Tonga

Tupaia : priest–navigator from Raiatea, Society Islands, who travelled with Captain James Cook

Tutapu (Tu-tapu) : navigator and chief from Hiva (probably in the Marquesas Islands), associated with establishment of vaka (tribes) on Rarotonga

Upolu : major island in Samoan archipelago

use-wear (weathering) : erosion on wood, bone, ivory, produced by the effect of handling, contact with liquids or semi-liquids such as blood and fat, sun, rain, insects, and other sources

'u'u (uu) : type of club used in the Marquesas Islands; class of temple assistant, someone who had killed an enemy in battle, work with inspirational priests during process of human sacrifice

vairua (vaarua, vaerua, virua, wairua) : spirit or soul of a person freshly killed; the spirit most likely to be used to animate an atua image

vaka (waka, va'a) : traditional watercraft throughout the Pacific region are generally known as 'canoe' in English. Increasingly, 'canoe' is being replaced with 'waka' or 'vaka' as the generic term. In this catalogue we use the local name wherever possible, but otherwise use boat, ship, canoe, vessel, and vaka as generic terms, depending upon context; tribe (Rarotonga)

western Polynesia : islands east of Fiji first settled by humans around 3000 years ago; including Tongan archipelago, Samoan archipelago, Uvea, Futuna, Rotuma, Niue, Tuvalu, Tokelau; Fiji can be considered to be part of western Polynesia

whare : house (Maori). See also fare

whare nui : meeting house, community house located on a marae (Maori)

Whiro : (Maori) see Hiro

worship : the act of focusing attention on an atua, or on an image or other object understood to have a direct connection to an atua

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IMAGE CAPTIONS

Front cover: *Female figure* (*moai papa*) (detail)
Rapa Nui (Easter Island), eastern Polynesia
Otago Museum, Dunedin, O 50.051.1

Inside front cover: Captain Jean-François de Galaup, comte de La Pérouse 1797 *Map of Easter Island* (detail)

Back cover: Captain James Cook and John Hawkesworth 1773 *Map of the Society Islands* (detail)

p 1 Offerings on the ava'a of marae Taputapuatea, at Te Po, Raiatea, Society Islands.

pp 2–3 **William Hodges** print after **William Woollett** engraver
The Fleet of Otaheite assembled at Oparee from the Charles Hoare extra-illustrated album of the complete 'Cook's voyages' 1777 London
engraving, printed in black ink, from one plate
National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, purchased 2013

p 6 Ruins of a small enclosure between marae Taputapuatea and marae Hauviri, at Te Po, Raiatea, Society Islands

p 9 Detail of male *ti'i* figure, Bishop Museum, Honolulu

pp 10–11, 42–43, 46–47, Captain James Cook and Lietuenant Henry Roberts 1785 *World map* (detail)

pp 22–23 Detail of Maori poutokomanawa figure, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra

pp 24–25 Charles Wilkes 1840 *Map of Fiji* (detail)

pp 32–33 Master William Bligh and Captain James Cook 1785 *Map of Tonga* (detail)

pp 38–39 Captain Jean-François de Galaup, comte de La Pérouse 1797 *Map of the Pacific* (detail)

pp 50–51, 68–69 Master William Bligh and Captain James Cook 1785 *Map of Cook Islands Mangaia* (detail)

pp 72–75, 112–113, 116–119 Charles Wilkes 1845 *Map of Tuamotu Archipelago* (detail)

pp 90–91 John Hawkesworth 1773 *Map of Society Islands* (detail)

pp 124–127 Captain James Cook 1777 *Map of the Marquesas Islands* (detail)

pp 152–155 Captain Jean-François de Galaup, comte de La Pérouse 1799 *Map of Hawai'i* (detail)

p 166 *Figure* (detail) Hawai'i, northern Polynesia
created before March 1779, wood, shell, hair, teeth, 66 cm
British Museum, London, Oc.1657

pp 174–175 Captain James Cook 1777 *Map of Easter Island* (detail)

pp 204–207 Captain James Cook and John Hawkesworth 1773 *Map of New Zealand* (detail)

p 234 Ha'amonga-a-Maui, Tongatapu, Tonga.
Built by the 11th Tu'i Tonga around 1200 AD

p 238 Raiatea, Society Islands

p 243 Langi (Royal Tomb), Lapaha, Mu'a village, Tongatapu, Tonga

p 246 Marae of the opu teina (the second born, those who departed), at Te Po, Raiatea, Society Islands

p 251 Coronation stone called Te-papa-tea-o-ruea at marae Hauviri, Te Po, Raiatea, Society Islands

p 252 Pu'ukohola heiau (top) and Mailekini heiau, Kawaihae, Hawai'i

IMAGE CREDITS

Inside front, back cover, p 10–11, 22–23, 25–26, 32–33, 38–39, 42–43, 46–47, 50–51 72–75, 90–93 ,112–113, 116–119, 124–127, 152–155 David Rumsey Map Collection, www.davidrumsey.com

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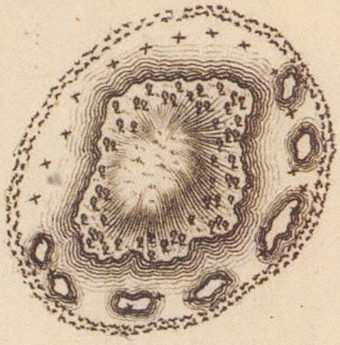
MAURUA



Taraua I

Mot

Oaeitato I

Otahaloura I

Pirare I

Toairoa I

Otea-vanua Harb.

Motuahuna I

0 Scale of Miles 5

utube Isle
Tetuatua Isle
Otubue Isle
BOLABOLA
Orueau Isle
Matahira I.
Tahutu I.
Tou tou Isles
Tonrhea
OTAHA
25
20
Oherurua Harb.
16
Whennuaia I.
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topoto Bay
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Toahoutu I.

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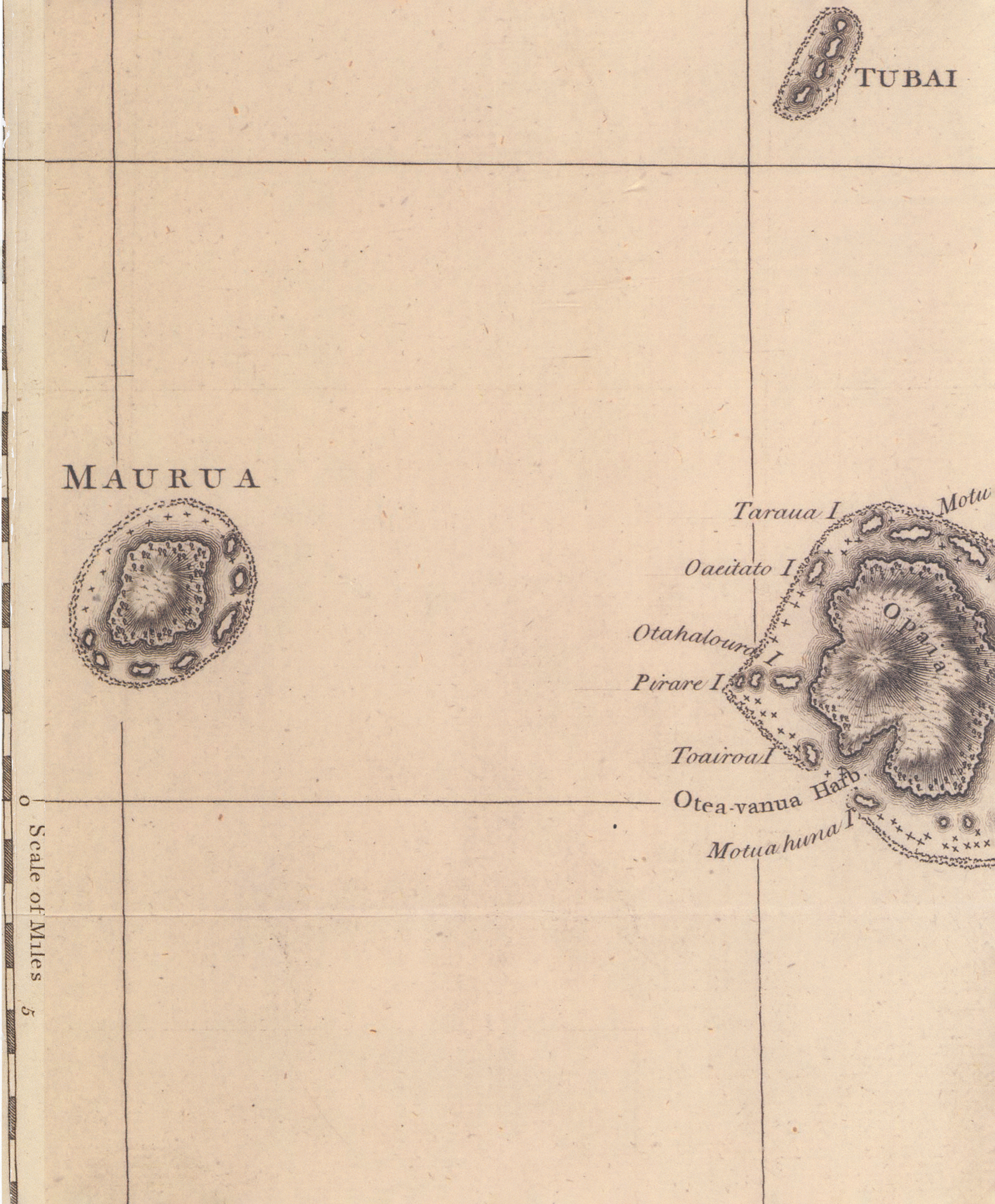
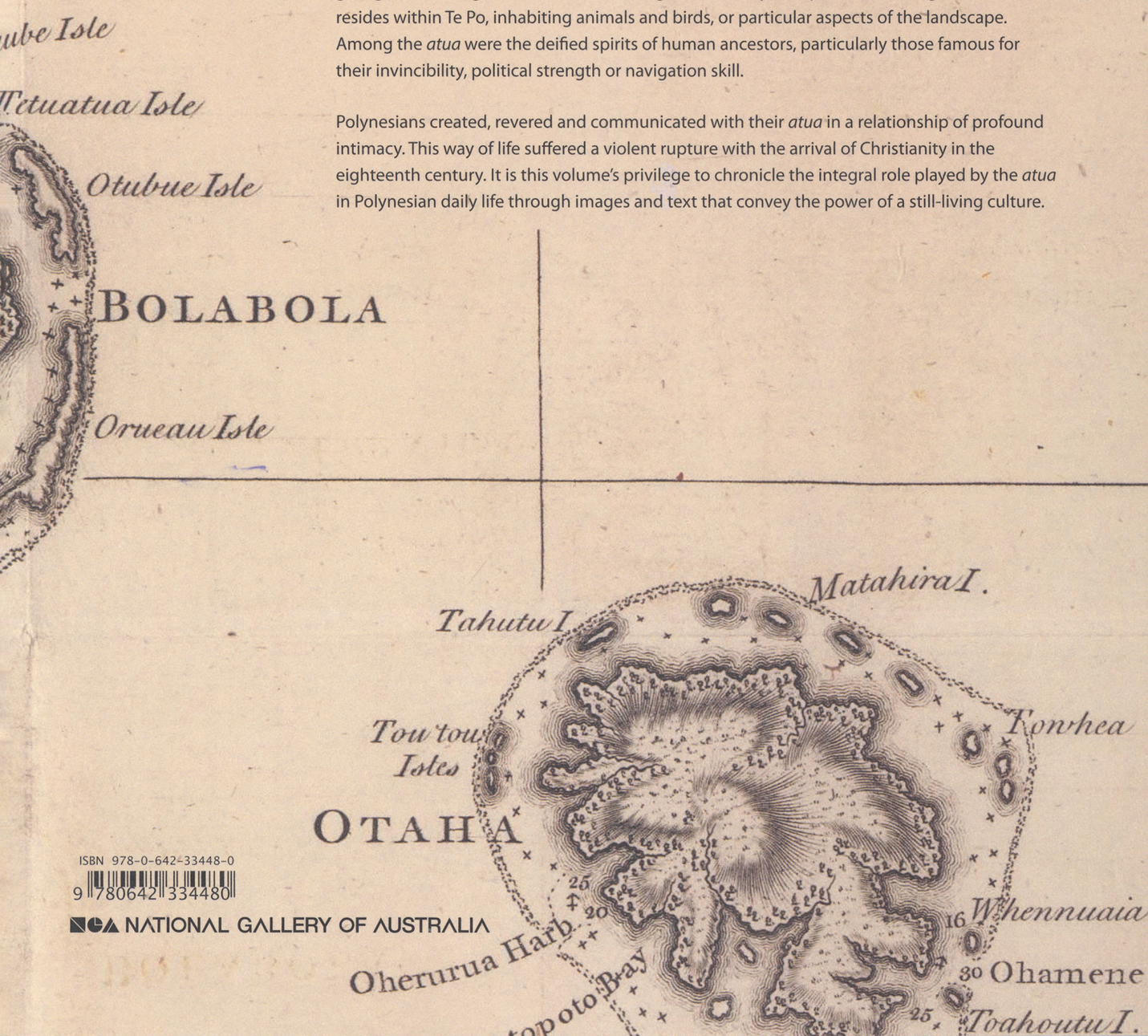

TUBAI
MAURUA
Taraua I
Motu
Oaeitato I
Otahalouro I
Pirare I
Toairoa I
Otea-vanua Harb.
Motuahuna I
0
Scale of Miles
5

The Polynesian concept of *atua*—of gods, figurative objects and associated beliefs—developed over thousands of years and spread throughout the region. The superb examples of sculpture illustrated in this volume provide an island-by-island insight into this rich and intriguing heritage.

Intrepid seafarers first discovered Polynesia 3000 years ago and, gradually, the region came to be inhabited by the communities established by these explorers. Across central and eastern Polynesia, from the Cook, Austral, Society and Marquesas islands, the Tuamotu Archipelago, Tahiti, Pitcairn, Rapa Nui, the Hawaiian Islands and Aotearoa New Zealand, unique, yet coherent, societies developed. With that a complex and sustaining spiritual world came into being.

Sculptures of ancestral gods connected the Polynesians with Te Po, the supernatural world, giving them strength and sacred knowledge. A hierarchy of supernatural beings—*atua*—resides within Te Po, inhabiting animals and birds, or particular aspects of the landscape. Among the *atua* were the deified spirits of human ancestors, particularly those famous for their invincibility, political strength or navigation skill.

Polynesians created, revered and communicated with their *atua* in a relationship of profound intimacy. This way of life suffered a violent rupture with the arrival of Christianity in the eighteenth century. It is this volume's privilege to chronicle the integral role played by the *atua* in Polynesian daily life through images and text that convey the power of a still-living culture.



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